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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. Ohin | (Togo) |
| <i>Members:</i> | Azerbaijan | Mr. Musayev |
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| | United States of America | Mr. Donegan |

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

The impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region

Letter dated 17 January 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2012/42)

Letter dated 8 February 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Togo to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2012/83)

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The meeting resumed at 3.25 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Sudan and Uganda to participate in this meeting.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): I thank Togo for organizing this open debate today. I also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks.

Transnational organized crime is an issue of increasing concern to all of us. It is a multifaceted phenomenon, fed by a number of factors. Yet, it is not always a threat to international peace and security.

This debate is relevant, for it gives Member States an opportunity to reflect on what the Security Council's involvement should be in those cases in which transnational organized crime indeed constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

Brazil is of the view that, if and when organized crime amounts to a threat to international peace and security, Security Council actions must be focused on fostering greater coordination of existing initiatives on the ground, as well as on strengthening national institutions and the rule of law, in particular in peacebuilding contexts.

It is therefore essential to recognize the primacy and importance of the efforts already made by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, among others, and to enhance coordination among those efforts.

The United Nations, in its turn, should cooperate and coordinate closely with regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and Economic Community of Central African States, and with other relevant actors, such as INTERPOL.

The transnational crime networks that operate in West Africa and the Sahel take advantage of the frail

socio-economic realities of the countries of the region to lay roots and prosper. That is why it is important to avoid addressing the issue merely from a security angle. An effective and long-lasting solution will require attention to social and economic factors, such as poverty and lack of employment, especially for youth.

In the fight against transnational organized crime, priorities should be determined by the affected countries themselves. International cooperation must be mindful of issues related to national sovereignty and ownership, as well as regional leadership. We encourage regional and subregional organizations and national authorities to engage in a coordinated response against organized crime that takes into account the specificities and the aspirations and concerns of the countries of the region. We also underline the need for international assistance to favour instruments that promote capacity-building and the strengthening of national institutions.

The problem of illicit drug and arms trafficking in West Africa and the Sahel is mostly an imported one. It is important to recognize that those regions have become transit points for drug trafficking and a destination for weapons that are not manufactured there.

In devising ways to combat transnational organized crime, the Council should adopt an integrated and balanced approach that also looks at the consumption side that fuels drug trafficking and at the need for better arms-control regulations at the national, regional and international levels.

The relationship between transnational crime and terrorism must be seen with caution. There is no unequivocal information to confirm a direct link between the operations of transnational trafficking networks and the financing of terrorist activities. Moreover, as those phenomena obey a different logic, they must be fought on a case-specific basis and through different means.

As Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Brazil is well aware of the negative impacts that transnational organized crime may have on peace and stability in West Africa. The configuration has been working, with the support of UNODC, to help Guinea-Bissau fight those crimes in an effective and timely manner. Guinea-Bissau participates in the West Africa Coast Initiative, which

aims at strengthening national and international coordination in the fight against transnational organized crime in the countries on its agenda.

Brazil is also engaged in a trilateral cooperation initiative with Guinea-Bissau and UNODC to help to establish a training centre for the security forces of Guinea-Bissau.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Ragolini (Italy): I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for the messages they delivered.

Today's open debate confirms the Security Council's ongoing attention to the growing threat of drug trafficking and transnational organized crime to regional peace and stability. Transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking are not only a security issue; they are a multifaceted threat that demands an integrated response. While it is very important to stop criminals and drug-traffickers, this should not be the sole driver of our policies. We have to address the root causes of these problems and implement a comprehensive strategy that fosters security and long-term socio-economic development.

Italy supports the Secretary-General's five-year action agenda aimed at mobilizing collective action and comprehensive regional and global strategies against organized crime, integrating rule of law, public health, development and human rights responses. In this regard, West Africa and the Sahel are test cases for the international community.

Let me offer some concrete examples of Italy's comprehensive approach to these phenomena and of the strategic coordination we have forged between international cooperation and regional and national policies.

In West Africa and the Sahel, Italy is actively involved in a complete set of programmes in the fields of the rule of law, institution-building, and training. Italy has financed \$1.6 million in international cooperation through the Economic Community of West African States and the West Africa Coast Initiative, which brings together UNODC, the Department of

Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and INTERPOL. In the framework of the EU Frontex agency, Italy has provided a coastguard unit and an aircraft for border controls in Senegal. Two teams of Italian police officers participated recently in a UNODC project to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Sierra Leone and Senegal to fight drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. These efforts helped establish transnational organized crime units in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.

The broad approach to security that Italy advocates is exemplified by our cooperation programs with Nigeria. In addition to the training of police officers, we also promote intercultural dialogue at the bilateral, regional and international levels. Programmes of this type have also been developed in Mali.

Italy recently hosted 20 Nigerian police-officers for a three-week training course in financial investigation techniques. We are also administering customized police-training programmes on border control techniques, and we have trained Nigerian officials at border postings in Italy. Over the past four years, the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Unit has trained approximately 300 African officers. With regard to initiatives to break up the partnership of convenience between criminal networks and terrorist organizations, in December 2010 the Italian Anti-Mafia Bureau signed a memorandum of understanding with its Nigerian partner, NAPTIP, on countering trafficking in human beings and the related illegal financial incomes.

All these technical assistance programmes are encompassed in the broader framework of development cooperation activities that Italy continues to carry on in several countries of West Africa and the Sahel region, notably Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

Three key elements should be emphasized. First, political will is a long-term decisive factor in fighting transnational organized crime. We need to ground this issue in the broader framework of the United Nations agenda. Italy is traditionally committed to building consensus on United Nations policies and common actions on drugs and crime. This was attested to by the General Assembly's high-level meeting on transnational organized crime, promoted by Mexico and Italy in 2010, and the annual General Assembly

resolution on the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, introduced by Italy and sponsored this year by 140 member States.

Secondly, drug trafficking still represents the single most profitable criminal industry worldwide. It spreads corruption to every level of affected States. Our strongest weapon is the legal framework provided by the United Nations Conventions on drug control, transnational organized crime, and against corruption. The protection of the integrity of these instruments and the promotion of their full implementation are an important feature of our common and shared responsibility.

Thirdly, the distinction between producer, transit and consumer countries is becoming blurred. Producer and transit countries are facing consumption problems in West Africa and the Sahel region as well, while consumer countries are starting to produce and export drugs. Supply reduction measures must go hand in hand with efforts to reduce demand and promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of drug users.

Last but not least, transnational organized crime operates as a global business that seeks to reap big profits. Curbing its financial power would affect its *raison d'être*. We can and must make the attack on the huge illegal assets accumulated by criminals around the world the cutting-edge of international security cooperation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Müftüoğlu (Turkey): We, too, thank Togo for having organized today's open debate.

Transnational organized crime poses a serious threat to peace, security and stability in all parts of the world. West Africa and the Sahel region are no exception. We are concerned that political instability, food crises, ongoing security challenges and recent social and political movements that have taken place in North Africa have further contributed to the consolidation of criminal networks in the region. The risk of reversing the peacebuilding progress in this particular region is yet another source of concern for us.

Organized crime, coupled with emerging threats, such as piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, necessitates appropriate political mobilization with integrated national and regional responses. That said, we are

pleased that some sincere efforts have been undertaken by countries and organizations of the region, as well as international bodies, to tackle the adverse impacts of crime in West Africa and the Sahel region.

We particularly would like to commend the regional action plan of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa, covering the period of 2008-2011. We also commend the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in cooperating with regional countries and the international community, and encourage UNODC to further its cooperation with all actors. We believe that reinforcing international coordination with the United Nations system will enhance the effectiveness of international efforts to tackle this global challenge.

While all the parties concerned have been making relentless efforts to eradicate transnational crime and criminal networks in the region, there still remain important tasks to be done and responsibilities to be taken on everyone's part.

First, we call on the regional countries to increasingly demonstrate their political will to consolidate the rule of law and to fight corruption.

Secondly, given the importance of regional cooperation and coordination, we urge ECOWAS to renew the regional action plan beyond 2011. This will not only ensure ownership at the regional level, but also send a strong message to the international community that the regional countries remain committed to fighting transnational organized crime. In this respect, Turkey welcomes the UNODC Regional Programme for West Africa for the years 2010-2014, which was devised to underpin the ECOWAS regional action plan.

Thirdly, we have to bear in mind that it is difficult to decouple the regional dimension of transnational crime from its global dimension, and that the countries of origin, countries of transit and countries of destination are all affected by this scourge. In this regard, all Member States have a responsibility to fight this menace. Drawing from this fact, the international community needs a more coordinated and concerted effort to tackle these problems. In this regard, Turkey welcomes the lead of the Secretary-General for the establishment of the UN System Task

Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking.

Fourthly, recognizing the fact that international cooperation and support are essential to tackling these problems, Turkey would like to call on all Member States to gear up their technical, financial and logistical support to the countries of the region, as well as to the regional organizations.

Fifthly, it is necessary to address these challenges from a holistic perspective. In this regard, initiatives at the national, regional and international levels should address also the development challenges of the countries concerned. We firmly believe that achieving long-term success in the fight against transnational crime is only one aspect of the broad strategy to eradicate poverty and unemployment and to promote decent living conditions for the entire population.

As one of the strategic partners of the African Union, Turkey will continue to cooperate with all the parties concerned to overcome the challenges in West Africa and the Sahel region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Viljanen (Finland): Finland wishes to thank the Republic of Togo for the concept note (S/2012/83, annex) and for convening this open debate. The observer of the European Union has already spoken, and I associate myself fully with that statement.

We also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2011/811), which encourages the countries of the region to continue to combat transnational organized crime, including illicit drug trafficking, and calls on international partners to provide support for those countries.

We warmly welcome the consideration of this topic at this venue. We share the deep concern over the impact that transnational organized crime has on peace, security, stability and on the wider development of this region. The linkages between organized crime, the trafficking of arms, drugs and human beings, and terrorism are indisputable. Countering those challenges requires strong determination and concerted action by the countries of the region, as well as the efforts and cooperation of the international community as a whole. Regional and local ownership is absolutely essential if our common efforts are to succeed.

We recognize that the challenges that the countries of West Africa and the Sahel are struggling with are multifaceted. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance that a comprehensive approach be adopted to counter those challenges. That approach includes the strengthening of the overall social and economic structures of those countries. To successfully and efficiently combat different forms of transnational organized crime requires determined efforts to enhance and strengthen law enforcement and judicial institutions.

Finland is involved in the international efforts to combat the trafficking in drugs and human beings, organized crime and illegal immigration. The Government of Finland has taken a decision to recruit an immigration liaison officer to our Embassy in Nigeria. He will begin his work in some weeks and will cover the whole region of West Africa, including the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). His work will include, among other things, cooperation with local and national authorities.

The United Nations is at the heart of the international cooperation on the prevention of transnational crime, as it is at the heart of the maintenance of international peace and security. Due to the global nature of the threat posed by organized crime and terrorism, effective counter-measures require continuous and consistent cooperation between different actors, including civil society. Cooperation between law enforcement and judicial authorities is an essential element of preventing and combating drug trafficking and terrorism. However, it is also important that the actions of authorities be consistent and appropriately transparent.

There is a clear link between development and security. The consolidation of the entire security situation should therefore be emphasized. That also requires addressing development issues such as the negative effects of climate change, which can lead to social instability in the region, as stated in the Secretary-General's report (see S/2012/42). Also, strong commitment to the rule of law and to the promotion and protection of the human rights is a precondition for stability and peace.

High levels of youth unemployment and poverty increase the appeal of terrorism and of joining organized crime groups. That makes it crucial to

combat the social exclusion of minorities and other groups and individuals in vulnerable situations. We must ensure that they have equal opportunities to participate in society.

Another major concern is the worsening humanitarian situation in Sahel region. The looming severe food crisis has put more 10 million people at risk, especially more than 1 million children. The international aid community should take anticipatory measures without delay to respond to the crisis. While providing humanitarian assistance, the root causes of the crisis must also be addressed. That should be followed up with long-term development efforts and the strengthening of the resilience of the population to tackle possible future droughts and food crises. Finland is currently planning the funding for its humanitarian assistance to the region for the beginning of the year. In 2011, Finland provided €5.1 million in humanitarian aid to Niger, Mali and Chad.

Finland strongly supports the countries of West Africa and the Sahel in their efforts to overcome those difficult challenges. In that regard, we would also like to pay tribute to the important role of the African Union and ECOWAS. We wish to encourage the countries in the region to further intensify areas of cooperation, not only among themselves but also with international partners. As I said at the beginning, countering those challenges requires the efforts and cooperation of the international community as a whole.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Togo on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and to express appreciation to the presidency of the Council for the organization of this debate on the important issue of the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region. I also welcome the presence here this morning of His Excellency President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé of Togo to preside personally over this debate. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his participation and his valuable contributions, as well as to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

There is no doubt that the activities of transnational organized crime networks have serious

implications for peace and security in Africa, and for West Africa and the Sahel region in particular. In turn, that affects international peace and security in general. Those activities therefore need to be addressed in order that they do not lead to a reversal in the progress made in consolidating peace and stability in the African continent.

In spite of what is highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflicts in Africa with regard to the significant reduction in the number of African countries engaged in armed conflicts — from 14 countries in the late 1990s to only just four countries today, which underlines the deep commitment of African Governments and peoples to the cause of peace, stability and development — many African countries are still unable to fulfil the developmental aspirations of their peoples, including the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals, where Africa still lags behind other regions in terms of rates of progress.

In addition, there is the growing impact of a group of emerging challenges to the efforts of African countries to achieve peace and development, notably those related to terrorism, acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea and transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons, illicit drug trafficking and the smuggling of small arms. The seriousness of those challenges in West Africa and the Sahel region were demonstrated by the negative effects of the terrorist acts experienced by a number of countries in the region, as well as acts of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, on the economic, social and humanitarian situations in those countries.

In that regard, Egypt remains deeply concerned about the terrorist threats posed by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb to the Sahel region in particular, and in West Africa in general. We emphasize the dire need to effectively address the terrorist threat through a comprehensive subregional counter-terrorism action plan supported by the United Nations that includes a capacity-building component so as to strengthen the limited security capacities and infrastructure of the countries in the region, including breaking any links between the terrorist group of Boko Haram in West Africa and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, as well as enhancing the capacity to prevent terrorists from organizing terrorist acts and moving freely across the borders of States in this region, through the

implementation of effective measures of law enforcement and border control and the monitoring of coastal and inland areas. In that context, Egypt reaffirms its readiness to contribute effectively to the counter-terrorism efforts made by the countries of the region, especially through the provision of training for security and law-enforcement forces, as well as through the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and best practices.

The countries of West Africa and the Sahel region have made a number of efforts at the national and regional levels to address those challenges, including through the conclusion of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition, and Other Related Materials, which entered into force in November 2009; the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa; and the African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention. However, the weak institutional capacity of the countries of the region in general and the economic and social challenges faced by those countries, in particular the high levels of poverty and unemployment, and the weakness of international assistance have had a negative impact on the outcome of those regional efforts.

Egypt believes that addressing the challenges associated with the activities of transnational organized crime networks requires coordinated action at the regional and international levels. Such action should take into consideration the direct link that exists between the fight against transnational organized crime in West Africa and the Sahel region, and the peacebuilding efforts under way in a number of countries in the region, as many of those countries face enormous challenges related to the weak capacity of their rule-of-law institutions and their limited ability to control their borders. Those challenges contribute to the creation of a breeding ground for the activities of organized crime networks, whose activities — especially through their financial revenues — in turn further weaken State authority and institutional capacity.

For all of those reasons, we need to work collectively to break the vicious circle of low institutional capacity and the rising threat of transnational organized crime.

In that regard, Egypt welcomes the initiatives aimed at including the combat against organized crime in the work of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Offices in many countries in the region, as well as at integrating the task of strengthening the capacity of national security institutions into the mandate of peacekeeping operations in Africa, taking into consideration the issue of the national ownership of reform and institutional capacity-building processes.

On the other hand, it should be stressed that a comprehensive approach to the issue of transnational organized crime — which has such strong repercussions on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region — should not be limited only to strengthening the institutional capacity of the countries of the region in the field of border control and law enforcement. It should also include, on the basis of the close interlinkages between peace, stability and development, support for the efforts made by the countries of the region to address the economic, social and humanitarian challenges facing them, including job creation, especially for young people.

Finally, Egypt stresses that the support of the international community and the United Nations system — in particular through the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office in West Africa and others — must be focused on building the capacity of regional mechanisms, support for border control and the exchange of information on transnational organized crime, including small-arms smuggling, illicit drug trafficking and trafficking in persons. It must also focus on the mobilization of broader international support for the countries of West Africa and the Sahel region, with a view to addressing the root causes of instability.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): At the outset, I would like to extend warm congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Kodjo Menan, Permanent Representative of Togo to the United Nations, on his presidency of the Security Council for the month of February, and to welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Faure Gnassingbé, President of Togo.

Japan commends Togo's initiative to continue the discussion on West Africa and the Sahel region, following up last month's initiative by South Africa. I

would also like to express appreciation to the Secretary-General for his decision to send assessment missions to examine the two emerging threats in the region, namely, piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea and the effect of the Libyan crisis on the countries in the Sahel region.

Countries in West Africa and the Sahel region have suffered greatly over the years from the threat of transnational organized crime, which includes terrorism, small-arms proliferation and illicit drug trafficking, but they have made strenuous efforts to overcome these difficulties. Some notable engagements in that area include efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to control small-arms proliferation and illicit drug trafficking. The four West African countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) have also strived to cope with those problems through security-sector reform and strengthening of the rule of law. Those efforts should be recognized.

However, recent discussions have highlighted the emerging challenges facing those regions. One is the issue of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, and the other is the fallout from the Libyan crisis. The Libyan crisis has generated approximately 420,000 returnees to neighbouring Niger, Mali, Chad and Mauritania, adding to the number of people already facing food shortages, and promoting the proliferation of weapons. Furthermore, the activities of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb pose a significant threat to security in the region. In addition, Japan is seriously concerned about the recent clashes between the Government and the Tuareg rebels in Mali, as well as the repeated attacks by the Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram. Effective action must be taken in order to prevent the region from retreating from the progress made thus far.

The transnational nature of these problems requires us to take a multifaceted approach that supplements existing national efforts while allowing ownership to remain in the hands of the countries affected. With that in mind, Japan has supported efforts to address the threats in the region through national, regional and multilateral frameworks.

At the national level, Japan has worked in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme to manage the proliferation of small arms in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, and

provided the vehicles necessary for controlling organized crime in Mali bilaterally.

At the regional level, we have been continuously providing assistance to ECOWAS since 2000. For example, Japan recently participated in efforts relating to capacity-building for counter-narcotics efforts in Guinea.

Multilaterally, Japan, through the PBC and the Commission's working group on lessons learned, has contributed to resource mobilization and expressed political support for security-sector reform and the strengthening of the rule of law in the countries on its agenda. We encourage the Security Council to utilize the outcomes of Peacebuilding Commission discussions as one of the tools for formulating its policies in this area.

We, the international community, must give serious consideration to what is being discussed here today. Transnational organized crime not only spans various countries; issues such as trafficking, terrorism and piracy are also closely interlinked. In order to fully utilize our existing resources, we must strengthen our efforts and ensure better coordination among the relevant regional and international actors. Japan remains committed, in cooperation with the United Nations, regional organizations and the countries in the region, to work to bring about peace and stability in these two critical regions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): May I at the outset express my thanks to the Togolese presidency of the Security Council for having chosen this issue of great importance to international peace and security, in particular in Africa. We are pleased to see His Excellency Mr. Faure Gnassingbé, President of the Republic of Togo, presiding over this debate on the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability on West Africa and the Sahel region. I should also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and other speakers for their valuable statements.

The States of West Africa and the Sahel are facing very serious problems that are threatening security and stability throughout the African continent and hampering the efforts being made towards

development and democracy. In particular, I am referring to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, illicit weapons and drug smuggling and the threat posed by terrorist groups.

The crises besetting many countries of the region have worsened an already precarious security situation, particularly in the Sahel region, due to the vast numbers of weapons, repatriated refugees, the appearance of new terrorist groups, the illicit transfer of arms and rising crime, as mentioned in the report of the assessment mission on the impact of the Libyan crisis on the Sahel region (S/2012/42). The same report adds that the deterioration of the security situation has made it more difficult to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches the people suffering chronic food and nutritional crises. It also indicates that in some isolated areas criminal organizations have taken over the provision of humanitarian assistance. That enables them to set up local networks of arms dealers and logistics, which once again shows how urgent it is to adopt a global and holistic approach in the fight against transnational organized crime at the national, regional and international levels, taking into account the very close link between a lack of security, underdevelopment and poverty.

Border areas remain particularly conducive to drug and arms trafficking and a rise in crime. More vigilance and active cooperation among all States of the region is more necessary than ever to effectively counter persistent threats to the security and stability of States and civilians.

Although the African Union and subregional organizations have developed regional measures on those issues, their resources and capacities continue to be limited given the scope of the current challenge. In its 2010 report, the International Maritime Organization stated that the West African coast was one of the six major hotbeds of piracy in the world, seriously disrupting international navigation. Similarly, as stated in the Secretary-General's report, certain countries in the West Africa region are stopovers for the large-scale cocaine smuggling going from Latin America to markets in Europe and the United States.

In order to prevent those problems from becoming even greater, it is urgent that we strengthen international cooperation to effectively combat this scourge, in particular by identifying appropriate means to deal with the mobility of the protagonists of

organized crime and terrorists and their use of new information technologies. A multilateral action at the multilateral level must be adopted to put in place mechanisms for facilitating judicial assistance, extradition, cooperation among forces responsible for public order, the consolidation of resources made available to police forces and the criminal justice system, and the consolidation of peace, with the cooperation of civil society in order to increase people's awareness and to encourage them to cooperate with the authorities to effectively combat this problem. We also share the view of the United Nations assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea with regard to how important it is that we develop a global strategy to combat piracy in the region. In that respect, we welcome the decision of the Togolese presidency to hold a meeting on 27 February to discuss this matter further.

In the same context, the international community, with the United Nations in the lead, is also called upon to redouble its efforts to establish an integrated global strategy to deal with the deep-rooted causes of instability in the region, in particular by ensuring better coordination to implement the initiatives undertaken by affected countries, the African Union, subregional organizations and their various bilateral and multilateral stakeholders; strengthening national capacities in order to ensure better border control and address the challenges of a lack of security and underdevelopment; mobilizing more international aid for West African and Sahel countries; and, lastly, enhancing the interoperability among the various United Nations bodies already in the area and their presence in the field, given the fact that no United Nations body currently has a global mandate to cover the vast Sahel region.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate how important it is to strengthen cooperation and the interaction among affected States, regional organizations and the various United Nations bodies to address the urgent needs for humanitarian aid and the many security-related, social and economic challenges linked to organized transnational crime, as well as the rapidly increasing youth unemployment.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Malme (Norway): Transnational organized crime represents a threat to peace, security and stability

in West Africa and the Sahel region, and ultimately to the rest of the international community. That calls for renewed and more coordinated international efforts, with the United Nations in the lead. That is why Norway supports the task force on transnational organized crime set up by the Secretary-General last year. We have provided earmarked funds for its start-up phase, and Norway's support enables Vienna to have a task force liaison officer here in New York.

Cocaine smuggled from Latin America through West Africa may end up in Norway and elsewhere in Europe, but it leaves drug abuse, corruption and violence in its path. Pirates in the Gulf of Guinea may target Norwegian vessels, but they also undermine economic activity in the region.

Furthermore, the aftermath of the Libyan crisis has accentuated some of those challenges and highlighted the need to address and counter them, as recently pointed out by the United Nations inter-agency assessment mission to the Sahel region and the report of the United Nations Office for West Africa (see S/2012/42).

Several West African States have over the past few years made important strides towards greater political stability and freedom. Yet, the situation remains tenuous. Terrorism and weapons proliferation, increasing piracy along the coast and the drug trade not only pose serious threats to the safety and lives of individuals, they also seriously challenge the governance, peace and stability of the States in the region, of both fragile post-conflict States and stable democracies.

Transnational organized crime is not just a judicial matter. It undermines the very foundations of States by penetrating deeply into the political sphere and the public and private sectors through corruption, money laundering and illicit financing.

Great efforts are already being made by the States in the region, with international support, to address those challenges. However, there is an urgent need for much closer coordination and cooperation between States in the region. There is also a need for stronger political commitments from Governments in the region. Law enforcement cooperation is important, but there must also be sufficient political will to tackle organized crime.

Important initiatives taken by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States need to be strengthened and supported by the international community. The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) has a key role in supporting the Member States in the region by addressing the threats from transnational organized crime. Norway welcomes the recent initiative to strengthen the collaboration between the United Nations and INTERPOL in West Africa and Sahel region.

The heightened focus on threats posed by organized crime deserves the place it has been given in the Secretary-General's five-year action agenda. We look forward to working with the United Nations to mobilize collective action and develop new tools to address this problem. We expect that the Secretary-General's task force on transnational organized crime will significantly contribute to integrating responses to transnational organized crime into the peacekeeping, peacebuilding, security and development activities of the United Nations. We hope the Task Force and the five-year action agenda will support relevant global and regional initiatives and create a focus that is sorely needed in regions such as West Africa.

Lastly, let me echo others in thanking Togo and its President for organizing this meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I would like to commend Togo and the Council for this open, focused and important debate. Canada also thanks the President for the frank concept note (S/2012/83, annex), with which we broadly agree.

Canada is concerned by the destabilizing effects of the illegal drug trade, especially cocaine trafficking, originating in the Americas. That is why we raised the matter at the 2010 Group of Eight Summit in Muskoka, and we commend France for the ministerial meeting of last May bringing together many countries from West Africa, the Americas and the Group of Eight. We would like to see that work continue, with a greater number of partners.

Transnational organized criminal groups and their trafficking in drugs, persons and firearms attack democracy and the rule of law, feeding corruption, disturbing free markets, reducing national wealth and

slowing the development of stable societies. Latin American transnational criminal organizations are extending their networks to new territories, which risks creating narco-States in West Africa and gravely threatens public security on both sides of the Atlantic.

(spoke in English)

Beyond the impacts of the illicit drug trade itself, we are also concerned about the potential for partnerships between organized crime and terrorist organizations. In a recent meeting of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum's Sahel Working Group, which Canada was privileged to co-chair with Algeria, considerable attention was paid to that threat. It was recognized that measures to counter one part of the problem would help against the other.

It is for those many reasons that Canada is engaged, on both sides of the Atlantic, in peacebuilding, institution-strengthening and capacity-building to help partner Governments in countering transnational organized crime and terrorism. Transnational threats require us to work better together multilaterally, regionally and bilaterally. Here in New York, Canada stands ready to do its part as Chair of the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, cooperating with other Commission configurations, regional Governments and other stakeholders to facilitate and encourage a more coordinated approach.

Indeed, the Sierra Leone example illustrates the imperative of regional and international cooperation. Sierra Leone has made admirable progress in fighting transnational crime. It is the most advanced member of the West Africa Coast Initiative, having fully established a transnational organized crime unit. Sierra Leone has also made great strides in reforming its justice sector and establishing an internationally respected anti-corruption commission. Yet that progress depends on developments across the region, including improved intelligence-sharing and early warning. Limited State capacity to monitor and patrol borders provides criminals with a high degree of freedom to seek the most favourable operating environments. Critically, many national authorities lack the necessary legal and technical tools to track financial flows and prevent money-laundering.

Recently, we have seen human smuggling rings take advantage of loose visa requirements to establish operations in West Africa. Some members of the region

have responded by limiting transit visas and visas granted on arrival, but the smuggling networks have adjusted and entered their irregular migrants through neighbouring countries. Canada congratulates Togo and Benin for the counter-measures they have taken and is working with the region to have that problem addressed coherently.

The regional action plan of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West Africa Coast Initiative are useful steps towards developing a truly regional response to transnational organized crime. Canada has contributed substantially to the implementation of the West Coast Africa Initiative through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. However, in order for the goals to be achieved, ECOWAS will need to redouble its leadership, Governments need to build sustainable national capacity with stronger financial and technical support from donors, and the United Nations needs to deliver a more integrated approach, as advocated by the Secretary-General. The Security Council should continue to identify this issue as an important part of post-conflict mission mandates, just as the Peacebuilding Commission should continue to develop a more robust, concrete approach to supporting the relevant countries on its agenda.

Finally, Canada is concerned about the humanitarian impact of the impending food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel. Recent statements from Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Catherine Bragg point to the severity of the situation. With up to 12 million people at risk owing to a combination of drought and chronic food insecurity, the situation has been exacerbated by the influx of returnees and recent fighting in northern Mali, resulting in internal and external displacement. In order to stop the cycle of repeating food crises in the region in the future, the underlying causes — an interplay of food insecurity, underdevelopment, limited national capacity and transnational threats — will all need to be addressed.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) *(spoke in French)*: Luxembourg fully subscribes to the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to warmly thank the President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faure Gnassingbé, for his initiative in organizing this

important debate. The report of the mission sent by the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the African Union, to assess the impact of the Libyan crisis on the Sahel region (see S/2012/42), confirms an alarming situation. The countries of the Sahel region are facing a situation of chronic poverty, an imminent humanitarian crisis and serious security problems, which predated the Libyan crisis but were exacerbated by it.

The acts of terrorist groups like Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram in West Africa, as well as other armed groups and the multitude of illicit traffickers, are transnational issues that concern all States of the region and that threaten considerable destabilization on a regional and even international level. The report of the United Nations assessment mission on piracy and other criminal activities in the Gulf of Guinea (see S/2012/45) points to a similar conclusion. A considerable effort will be required in the sharing of intelligence, the updating of legal frameworks, the building of the capacity needed to allow States to fulfil their sovereign functions and the fight against bad governance and corruption. The meeting of 10 African heads of State in Cotonou on 18 February to discuss security in the Sahel region should be commended as an important step in this direction.

In the short term, a concerted security response, as initiated by some of the States of the subregion, notably through the pooling of resources, could truly make a difference and should be supported by the international community. Given the transnational nature of organized crime and terrorist networks, border control and Governments' presence in their countries' most remote regions are two essential elements, which should be at the heart of strategies and operations, at the national, regional and multilateral levels, in order to avoid the security vacuum being filled by criminal and terrorist organizations.

Since it is obvious that security represents part of the solution, any sustainable stabilization of the region will need to be based on a parallel socio-economic development of the countries of the region, with particular emphasis on vocational training and job creation for young people. In that spirit, Luxembourg has provided substantial support over the past decades to the States of the Sahel and West Africa, notably Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Cape

Verde. We intend to continue those partnerships in the future.

We fully share the opinion of the Secretary-General concerning the need to strengthen international cooperation in support of the region and the need to improve its coherence and coordination. The strategy for the Sahel that the European Union recently adopted is grounded in such an integrated approach.

In order to strengthen the dynamic that has been generated, we trust that the new leadership of the Economic Community of West African States, whom I would like to congratulate on their election, will give priority to the renewal of its regional action plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, so that all countries affected by the scourge of drug trafficking and organized crime may benefit from it and participate in the West Africa Coast Initiative, in partnership with the United Nations system and INTERPOL. With its intimate knowledge of West Africa, we would in particular encourage the United Nations Office for West Africa to continue its efforts to bring together the activities of the United Nations system and establish links with major ongoing regional, subregional and national initiatives.

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission has a role to play in that regard. In the context of the Guinea configuration, which I have the honour to chair, important progress has been made in the area of the reform of the judiciary and the security and defence sectors. Similarly, the recent charges made by the panel of judges investigating the violence of 28 September 2009 confirm the strong will of the Government of Guinea to make progress in the fight against impunity. We very much hope that Guinea will soon be able to contribute actively to the West Africa Coast Initiative and to the fight against the scourge of transnational organized crime.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the Council's continuous work for a better integration of efforts to fight transnational organized crime in the Sahel region and West Africa, and to address its impact on peace, stability and security.

Luxembourg is firmly convinced that it is important to address the dimensions of peace and security, of development and human rights in a comprehensive manner, paying equal attention to each of them.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Somdah (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We would also like to thank you for convening this debate on the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the delegation of South Africa for the manner in which it carried out the Council's work during the month of January. I welcome the participation and important statements by the Secretary-General and the other participants in this debate.

The topic of this debate — which is complementary to, and takes further, the consultations of the Council during January on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the report (see S/2012/42) of the assessment mission of the impact of the Libyan crisis on the Sahel region — provides an opportunity to comprehensively and holistically review the security issues facing the States of the region. The issues of insecurity in the Sahel, as well as an upsurge in drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in West Africa have become potential sources of insecurity and instability for States of the region, as well as for the international community as a whole.

Those issues are compounded by a food crisis in the Sahel region and by piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. They clearly demonstrate the interlinkages between security and development, in particular at a time when people's fundamental needs have become increasingly urgent. At a time when the States of the region are obliged to channel their energies into priorities in development, security issues jeopardize the progress made and endanger State institutions, peace and security.

Along those lines, the agenda of the fortieth Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was essentially devoted to security issues in the subregion, in particular to insecurity in the Sahel and to the spike in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The interaction between drug trafficking and related criminal activities — such as the funding of conflicts, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking in

weapons and money laundering — further weaken those regions, in which a number of States are still emerging from conflict or are currently experiencing crises.

Mindful of the impact of such transnational activity on security and development, Burkina Faso convened in 2009, for the first time, a thematic debate on drug trafficking and the threat to international peace and security. It is both urgent and important that the international community, and the Security Council in particular, continue to take action to provide appropriate responses to those issues.

It is a welcome fact that, during its consultations on 26 January, the Security Council took up the issue of the exacerbation of the security situation in the Sahel region in the aftermath of the Libyan crisis, and that it underscored, in so doing, the need for a coordinated approach that would bring together all stakeholders, including the United Nations.

My delegation supports that approach and remains convinced that only heightened cooperation at the subregional, regional and international levels will make it possible to tackle criminal and terrorist activities, which threaten the stability and security of the States of the Sahel and West Africa. We commend and encourage the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL, the West Africa Coast Initiative and the relevant departments of the Secretariat in support of the efforts of the States of the region, in particular with respect to implementing the ECOWAS action plan for combating drug trafficking.

We believe that the recommendations contained in the report of the inter-agency mission have already addressed some concerns, in particular with regard to United Nations capacity-building support to Member States and subregional and regional mechanisms for cooperation, as well as with regard to the implementation of strategies and programmes that address the root causes for upswings in transnational organized crime in those two regions. It is primarily the responsibility of the heads of State of the region to enhance their cooperation at all levels. But it is also the responsibility of the international community, in particular that of the Security Council, to support State efforts to combat such indiscriminate threats. We therefore fervently hope that the appeal launched by ECOWAS during its fortieth Summit will receive

effective and prompt support from the international community, especially from the United Nations.

For its part, Burkina Faso is an active participant in the activities and initiatives undertaken regionally and subregionally in order to combat criminal and terrorist activities, in particular those that pertain to drug trafficking in West Africa, as well as the regional legal cooperation platform that brings together three other countries, namely, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Burkina Faso is also prepared to cooperate subregionally in the framework of the joint strategy for counter-terrorism.

We must not overlook the impact of the grave food crisis on the countries of the Sahel region. While we welcome the solidarity already demonstrated by several partners, agencies and countries following the urgent appeal for humanitarian assistance launched by several countries of the region, we nevertheless encourage the international community to support the efforts of affected countries.

In conclusion, we call upon the international community to become part of a holistic and comprehensive approach in order to provide adequate solutions to the security issues in the Sahel region and in West Africa, and to understand that they are everyone's responsibility. The conclusions of this debate should go along these lines.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal.

Mr. Diallo (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like at the outset to welcome you, Mr. President, to United Nations Headquarters and to express our pride at seeing you assume the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

Like other speakers, I would also like to warmly congratulate and thank the Togolese delegation for having taken this wise and timely initiative to organize an open debate on the issue of transnational organized crime, which is one of the major concerns of West Africa and the Sahel region.

Given the numerous and diverse threats posed by transnational organized crime to the African continent, and particularly West Africa, it is appropriate that we focus on this important issue. Unfortunately, the combination of factors such as porous borders, poverty and political instability create fertile ground for organized crime in that part of the world. It goes

without saying that unless bold steps commensurate with the danger are taken, this ever-growing scourge will undoubtedly undermine our economic development efforts and jeopardize the still fragile national and social stability of several States of West Africa and the Sahel region.

The danger is made even clearer by the many reports of the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, which establish that transnational organized crime is fuelled in large part by trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings, as well as piracy and money-laundering. If it is to be effective, the fight against transnational organized crime must therefore comprehensively address all the insidious facets of this scourge.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in our subregion remains a major source of concern, given how cheap and easy they are to obtain. They seriously jeopardize the security and economic and social development of our countries, raising the spectre of escalating conflicts, crumbling peace agreements, increased violence and growing crime.

Recognizing this, in 2006 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, which came into force in 2009. The Convention offers a gleam of hope that real progress might be made against the spread of these weapons, whose circulation in West Africa remains a dangerous spark in an already inflammable region.

Through its regional action plan of 2008, ECOWAS has established a unit dedicated to fighting drug trafficking, which is the key mechanism for cooperation and intelligence-sharing with similar organizations engaged in the same battle in Europe, Latin America and the United States. The States members of ECOWAS attach considerable importance to the development and harmonization of legislation governing drug-related investigations and trials.

Also in the framework of the operationalization of the action plan, a subregional conference on the harmonization of efforts to fight drug trafficking was held February 2010 in the capital of Senegal, leading to the adoption of a road map commonly known as the Dakar Initiative. This multisectoral response is principally aimed at reducing supply and demand through the suppression of drug trafficking and the

strengthening of operational mechanisms for information exchange, the creation of a subregional crime database, and improved border controls.

The development of international law enforcement in the fight against money-laundering is a key part of the drive to eradicate all activities related to organized crime. In that regard, cooperation must not be limited to the financial sphere, but must include in particular strategic support among the various partners in the form of a strategic alliance against drug trafficking.

Clearly, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime remains the main instrument of the international legal response to this scourge and continues to generate real hope that the spread of such crime can be halted. To achieve the aims of the Convention, the task force set up to monitor its implementation must be given the resources it needs.

Another major focus of our concern continues to be the worrisome increase of acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel region. We must do more to counter such activity, which, in addition to jeopardizing the freedom of international shipping, hampers the economic development of the countries affected.

Despite all the individual and collective efforts of States to avert the many disastrous consequences of this scourge for our countries, much remains to be done if it is finally to be wiped out. If we are to address the full scope and various facets of the struggle, we must not merely enhance national and regional regulation and surveillance capacities. My delegation therefore believes that, in addition to the domestic adoption of the principles of economic and political good governance, the international community must support the efforts of the countries of West Africa and the Sahel to fight poverty, social insecurity, political instability and the disruption of the ecological balance.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Prozor (Israel): I want to thank you, Sir, for presiding over the Security Council today, and the Togo delegation for organizing this important discussion.

Seven months ago, the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Abuja claimed the lives of more than 20 people and shocked the world. That was

just one of 115 separate attacks engineered last year by Boko Haram that killed more than 500 people. The Secretary-General correctly described the attack on the United Nations headquarters as an assault on those who devote themselves to helping others. The explosions in Abuja illuminated the struggle now taking place for Africa's future between those who seek stability and those who seek chaos; between extremism and progress; between hope and hatred.

The alarming rise in terrorism throughout West Africa is connected to a global trend. It is made possible by an increasingly linked network of smuggling rings, traditional criminals and terrorists. Terrorists understand that if one can smuggle narcotics into a European capital, one can easily do the same with an anti-aircraft missile. They understand that lawless environments are fertile ground for radicalization. They recognize that selling drugs can pay for bombs.

Working together, criminals, gangsters and terrorists have declared war on stability in West Africa. They remain a key obstacle to unlocking the region's vast potential. The criminal terrorist networks in West Africa are not only a local problem; they are a global problem. West Africa's battle is our battle. Its enemies are our enemies, and its future is our future. The State of Israel understands that our destinies are intertwined with those of the nations of West Africa and the Sahel. Today, we stand shoulder to shoulder with these nations as we pursue common opportunities and face common threats.

Israel is particularly concerned about Hizbullah's activity in the region, which has served as a hub for the terrorist organization's operations for more than two decades. Hizbullah uses West Africa as a transit point for funnelling money, arms and drugs to far-flung corners of the globe. These criminal enterprises strengthen Hizbullah's ability to create sleeper cells in the region and to garner support from the local population.

The world cannot afford to stand by and give Hizbullah a base for operations in West Africa. These activities are not only a clear and imminent danger to the people of Africa. Hizbullah and its Iranian sponsors pose a threat to innocent people in all corners of the globe — as we saw last week in New Delhi, Bangkok and Tbilisi.

The security challenges in West Africa call for a two-track approach. The international community must work with African nations to root out terrorism and crime while we nourish the roots of development and prosperity. Together, we must strengthen regional cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts, toughen border controls and improve intelligence-sharing. We must ensure that terrorist and criminal groups are placed on every terrorism and law enforcement watch list at the national and international levels.

Together, we must make greater efforts to prevent the transfer of small arms and all other weapons to criminals and terrorists, including dual-use items. Israel is prepared to play our part in that effort. Our export control laws and regulations are rigorous and extensive. They ensure that all arms exports meet the standards and criteria set by the Wassenaar Arrangement and all other supplier regimes.

Israel has long worked hand in hand with African nations to combat transnational crime and terrorism. We continue to share our knowledge and experience with many African States and regional organizations. These collaborative efforts span a range of issues from terrorist financing to aviation security and from money-laundering to border protection. Israel is proud to be a donor and an active partner in the counter-terrorism efforts here at the United Nations, working closely with bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the international counter-terrorism committees.

Development must be a part of a long-term strategy to fight crime and terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel. A strong foundation of economic security, good governance and social cohesion denies criminals and terrorists the environments that they need in order to operate.

Israel has been deeply engaged in development cooperation in Africa for more than five decades. In 1958, Golda Meir, then serving as Foreign Minister, made a historic visit to the newly independent States of Africa. On her trip, Golda Meir resolved to share Israel's growing expertise with our African neighbours. She said,

“Like them, we had shaken off foreign rule; like them, we had to learn for ourselves how to reclaim the land, how to increase the yields of our crops, and how to defend ourselves.”

Thousands of Israeli experts set out for the continent — driven by the spirit of what we call *tikkun olam*, the Jewish principle that calls on us to mend the world and make it a better place.

The connections forged in those years have blossomed into a programme of extensive cooperation. Today in Ghana, Israel's network of prenatal clinics has dramatically reduced child and infant mortality. In Senegal, our triangular partnership with Italy has brought innovative Israeli drip irrigation to thousands of African farmers, helping them to move from poverty to self-sufficiency. We continue to look for new opportunities to build institutions and capabilities in the region.

In many corners of West Africa today, we see how trouble comes in twos and threes. Criminals and terrorists continue to exploit instability and lawlessness and to sow even greater chaos. The international community must work with African nations to break this cycle. We must pave the road to development, while clearing the obstacles of terror and crime from its path. This is a collective challenge. No nation is free from responsibility, and no nation can escape the consequences of inaction.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Teguedi (Mauritania) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Togolese delegation for organizing this debate and the President of the Togolese Republic for his participation. My country also thanks Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement and his efforts. We also thank Mr. Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The issue of security and development has been one of the major challenges facing the Sahel region since the end of the last century. The region has suffered the eruption of conflicts and armed rebellions, as well as severe environmental upheavals, such as the great drought of the 1970s that pushed hundreds of thousands of farmers into large cities that lacked adequate infrastructure, thereby promoting the smuggling and trafficking of arms and all sorts of goods. This in turn led to the expansion of organized crime networks, terrorism and human trafficking. Those trends have been exacerbated in areas of the region where States have been undermined by security and economic structures that are inadequate to the size

of their territory and by difficulties in effectively monitoring porous borders.

Since the start of the century, our country has been hamstrung by the activities of organized crime networks and terrorist attacks at a time when we have not been prepared to deal with such threats. The first signs of the threat emerged in 1994, when members of a Salafist group related to some foreign extremists was arrested, while others managed to find refuge in Somalia and Afghanistan. That group reappeared in 2003, after the occupation of Iraq. Some young Mauritians, seeking to make their way to Iraq, made contact with the former Algerian Armed Islamic Group, which is active in the mountains that range from southern Algeria to northern Mali, in order to train in using weapons before going to Iraq as jihadists.

Today, our country hosts no terrorist base or site. Attacks are perpetrated from a rear base to which they return immediately afterwards. Nevertheless, the system of effective security mechanisms in place along the border makes infiltration into our country more and more difficult.

The Mauritanian Government wishes to guarantee stability and security in our country in order to achieve its socio-economic objectives. It is determined, despite its immense territory and modest resources, to tackle those challenges and place them at the centre of our priorities. This effort has two dimensions. One is national, and under that framework Mauritania has developed a strategy following three guidelines.

The first is prevention and territorial security. Preventing all terrorist activity within our national territory requires securing our borders through efficient border controls and permanent monitoring of the same; the creation of mobile armed intervention units that are well-equipped, including for aerial surveillance; cooperation among countries in information-sharing; and the control of immigration in order to prevent all infiltration of terrorist recruiting elements.

The second is awareness-raising and education. The Government has initiated actions aimed at countering terrorism on its own territory through communication campaigns involving public debates and the media.

The third is treatment and punishment. In addition to ratifying conventions and protocols, Mauritania has established a legal framework aimed at

defining and punishing terrorism-related crimes and financing. Under that framework, the Government has set out to train and professionalize officials participating in the fight against terrorism in all its aspects.

I turn now to the regional dimension. In the face of the transnational nature of the terrorist threat, and given the weak economic resources of the region, the countries most exposed — a group commonly known as the “field” that includes Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger — have strengthened their cooperation on security matters by meeting periodically since 2010, first in Algiers, then in Bamako in 2011 and in Mauritania in January this year, with a view to periodically adjust their shared strategy and fight against the phenomenon.

Through such cooperation, we have created counter-terrorism organizations, including an outreach and liaison unit, with the objective of exchanging information on security issues; a joint operational committee of chiefs of staff with human and material resources for rapid ground intervention; and a follow-up technical committee for projects aimed at development in this area. Meetings with partners from outside the region were convened in September, November and December 2011 in Algiers, Washington, D.C., and Brussels, respectively, to secure funding for regional projects in vulnerable and impoverished areas of the four countries of the field.

Following those steps, significant results were achieved. The first was the dismantling of several active or dormant terrorist cells and the elimination of some 465 terrorist individuals over the past three years. Several attempted terrorist attacks failed owing to a dozen operations. Operational bases of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb near Mauritania, which were threatening its national security, were dismantled. Thirty-five groups of traffickers of all sorts were eliminated. Security staff was well organized and trained. Young people gained awareness of the terrorist threat and its various mechanisms. A reliable database was established from data gathered on the modus operandi of cells and their financing. Several supply lines of the various terrorist groups were eradicated.

In conclusion, the terrorist phenomena should be taken seriously because it is a genuine threat for the countries of the region. We note that terrorist groups are increasingly well equipped and trained.

International cooperation is essential in order to eliminate the phenomenon, which is transnational. It must be in the context of a partnership and respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I would first like to thank Togo for its leadership in convening this debate and, in particular, President Gnassingbé for his presence today and you, Mr. Minister, for your presence this afternoon. As everybody has recognized today, the challenges facing West Africa and the Sahel clearly demand a much greater international focus. The Secretary-General's warning this morning of the fear of a humanitarian crisis of the magnitude of that affecting the Horn of Africa should be a wake-up call for us all.

Transnational crime takes various forms that are all too often viewed as separate phenomena. However, in truth, as we know, transnational crimes tend to feed off and reinforce each other. Such crimes obviously thrive in environments where there are challenges to governance, where Governments, law enforcement agencies and judiciaries lack the capacity to pursue and prosecute criminals, and where unemployment, including of the youth, is such a serious problem.

The challenges confronting the Sahel are particularly acute. Existing challenges have been exacerbated by the Libya crisis, with resultant flows of weapons and the influx of returnees. More broadly, as the representative of Mauritania has just starkly reminded us, the region faces existing threats of regional drug trafficking, piracy and terrorism. Today, we have heard worrying warnings about the links between organized crime and terrorist groups. The exacerbating impact of the effects of climate change — as recognized by the assessment mission to the Sahel — compounds those challenges.

The assessment mission report (see S/2012/42) clearly spells out necessary actions, and we must note them. They include multisectoral reintegration initiatives for returnees, with a strong focus on conflict prevention, social cohesion and protection. Programmes that focus on youth unemployment are vital. In the long term, conflict prevention programmes need to address access to justice, particularly given the weak rule of law structures in the areas of return. More broadly, across West Africa and the Sahel, national Governments need support to secure their national

borders, including against the transfer of weapons, and to implement national programmes to destroy illegal arms. We need to build the capacity of Governments to tackle transnational organized crime and terrorism by strengthening national institutions and facilitating information and intelligence exchange, coordination and joint operations.

We must also support regional security strategies and mechanisms. Here, of course, the role of the Economic Community of West African States is critical. Given that there is no one subregional organization that covers all the Sahel, the roles of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations are, obviously, particularly important.

We support the strengthening of the United Nations system's security capacity and presence on the ground in the region, and are interested in the Secretary-General's proposal this morning for specialized police units within peace operations to work alongside national units to build capacity and tackle crime. We also support the recommendation of an overarching framework to bring together all affected countries in the Sahel to address those challenges.

Australia seeks to play its own part in such issues. My written statement includes a fair amount of detail, but I would mention — only as examples — a few of the efforts that are needed in the region: our active work, for example, with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate to enhance border control capabilities; our strong efforts against money laundering; our active role in preparing for the arms trade treaty, to be negotiated in July. That is obviously a vital instrument for Africa and, of course, we need to do much more to implement the Programme of Action on Small Arms and an effective and quick disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme across North Africa, arising out of the Libyan problems.

In terms of our own assistance, we have particularly focused on seeking to improve mutual legal assistance between Francophone and Anglophone countries and on developing, with the AU, a series of transnational crime guides.

Briefly, in relation to piracy, I might note that Togo's concept note for today's meeting (S/2012/83, annex) explains the need to examine how pirates of various regions interact and what kind of problems that can mean. As part of the effort to better understand the

root causes and to draw from experience across different regions, Australia will host a conference on piracy later this year, certainly by mid-year, which will specifically compare, or seek to compare, the experiences of counter-piracy cooperation in the Indian Ocean, South-East Asia and West Africa.

Towards concluding, the Council has regularly reaffirmed the strong nexus between security and development. We all need to recognize — and cannot pretend that we do not — that there is an urgent priority to quickly mobilize programmes to ensure that unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, lack of education and poverty do not continue to feed violence and extremism. As we know, those vulnerabilities are a toxic combination.

We must also, of course, address the urgent humanitarian needs facing the Sahel region, but longer-term resilience to meet food security challenges, in particular, is vital. Last week, my own country announced another contribution of \$10 million to assist with that, in addition to a \$100-million programme that we recently launched to focus on resilience, including agricultural productivity and community resilience, particularly in West Africa.

To conclude, Australia remains committed to continuing to work with all partners to make a secure and sustainable future for the people of the region a reality. We pledge to do more.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): Allow me, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, to congratulate the Republic of Togo on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and for discharging the responsibilities wisely. Let me convey our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this timely discussion on the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region. I thank the Secretary-General for his informative briefing, which has set the stage for today's discussion.

The activity of criminal networks is an international problem that transcends borders and undermines our collective security and economic well-being. In West Africa, organized crime negatively impacts on efforts to achieve economic security and political stability. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is persistently hampering maritime navigation, with dire

consequences for the economies of the subregion. It also threatens the stability and security of coastal countries and beyond.

Drug trafficking in the subregion has led directly to increased violent crimes, small arms proliferation, human trafficking, money laundering, and political and economic instability. The fallout of the Libyan conflict by fuelling illicit trafficking networks and arms flows and an upsurge in terrorist attacks and other forms of destabilization in the Sahel has made the threats in West Africa and the Sahel more acute and deserving of critical attention by the Security Council and the international community.

Countries in the Sahel region are also contending with the influx of hundreds of thousands of traumatized and impoverished returnees. Indeed, organized crime is a growing threat that is destabilizing an already tenuous region that is still grappling with challenges of security and development, such as weak governance structures, high youth unemployment, poverty and a lack of effective security.

Security Council resolution 2017 (2011), which drew attention to the risk of destabilization posed by the dissemination of illicit small arms and light weapons in the Sahel region, was an important first step in the effort to address the challenges of organized crime in the region. But more can be done. That is why we welcome the assessment missions to the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel. We hope that their findings and recommendations will provide impetus for further addressing the challenges in the region in a comprehensive manner.

Undoubtedly, the countries of West Africa and the Sahel region have demonstrated a strong political will to confront the threats of organized crime. The joint strategy developed by Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to counter terrorism needs to be fully supported. The prospect of expanding the scope of cooperation to Mali and Nigeria in the implementation of the strategy is a move in the right direction. The establishment of a regional judicial platform by countries of the Sahel has indeed institutionalized judicial cooperation in the region. It has paved the way for the harmonization of laws that have proved invaluable in prosecuting transnational criminals.

However, fighting transnational organized crime is not a task that can be undertaken in isolation. It requires close collaboration and coordination at the

bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels. It also requires partnerships, initiatives and strategies to effectively address this menace. The expanding scourge of drug trafficking demands heightened vigilance and the firm commitment of the international community, based on universal adherence to the international conventions related to the fight against drug trafficking. It also demands effective cooperation and more active coordination of efforts. That approach obliges the international community to always take into account the larger question of drug-supply and drug-demand control channels, as they are invariably interrelated.

In West Africa, there have been several initiatives in addressing the growing menace of piracy. Benin and Nigeria commenced a six-month joint patrol programme along the coast of Guinea on 28 September 2011. The programme, which is being conducted under Nigeria's strategic command and Benin's operational command, draws 95 per cent of its logistic support from Nigeria, including in particular two helicopters, two maritime vessels and two interceptor boats. The collaboration has recorded some success but still faces major constraints, including the absence of logistical support facilities for vessels being used to conduct patrols.

International assistance would be vital in ensuring the sustainability of this productive enterprise. The Economic Community of West African States plan of action to address illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse is a relevant tool to tackle the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, but its implementation has been limited to West Africa. New initiatives should be taken to broaden its capacity and widen its scope for more far-reaching implementation.

Indeed, a multifaceted approach at the national, regional and global levels in the wider context of poverty eradication and human development is required. Criminal justice and law enforcement responses must be supported by programmes that address root causes of crime and the eradication of poverty. In that regard, the United Nations system as a whole should recommit itself to the goal of assisting the subregion to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015.

We cannot overstate the need for cooperation, coordination and committed and concerted action by

the international community. We already have the legal instruments and tools to make crime unattractive and unprofitable. What we need most at this time is to mobilize the oversight, international political will and our resources to win the war against organized transnational criminals.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Daou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin, Sir, by asking you to relay to the President of the Togolese Republic, Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, the warm greetings of his brother and friend, the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré, and his heartfelt congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. The delegation of Mali especially welcomes Togo's initiative to convene this meeting on peace and security in Africa, and in particular the impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region.

My delegation also thanks Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for having dispatched in December 2011, together with the African Union, a joint assessment mission on the impact of the Libyan crisis in the Sahel region.

All of these initiatives, which Mali welcomes, illustrate the growing interest of the Security Council in the Sahel region, which, as we know, is facing growing insecurity due to the activities of the Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb terrorist group and criminal networks engaged in the trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings.

Transnational organized crime, terrorism and the activities of rebel groups undermine peace, security and stability in the Sahel. As President Gnassingbé so eloquently expressed in his statement this morning:

“[T]he actions of rebel groups, which are already endangering the stability and territorial integrity of several countries, have unfortunately intensified following the Libyan crisis, which has led to a significant flow into the region of weapons of every calibre.” (*S/PV.6717*)

My delegation shares this assessment, which is in line with the situation in northern Mali. Indeed, since 17 January, a number security and armed forces units from villages and cities in Mali have been the targets

of armed attacks perpetrated by the so-called Movement for the National Liberation of Azawad, which claims to be fighting for the independence of Azawad through the division of our national territory. These attacks are directly linked to the crisis in Libya, as the arrival in our country of hundreds of Libyan troops with extensive arsenals of weapons of all sorts and vehicles has radically changed the nature and objective of the aforesaid Movement.

Indeed, although a national movement of Azawad — which simply called for recognition as a national political organization guided by the principles of national unity and a peaceful approach — existed as early as November 2010, by the second half of 2011 that group had developed into a liberation movement that resorted to armed struggle. At the same time, its leaders, recently returned from Libya, claimed to have left that country to wage war — a war which today they hope to paradoxically impose upon the Government and people of Mali.

For us, the aggression we face today, coupled with the increased proliferation of weapons and other military equipment, is a collateral consequence of the crisis in Libya, as demonstrated by the report of the joint assessment mission of the United Nations and the African Union on the impact of the Libyan crisis in the Sahel region (see S/2012/42). The situation that prevails in northern Mali as a result of the rebellion has also led to a deterioration in the humanitarian situation. There are IDPs, and refugees have fled to neighbouring countries.

The attacks perpetrated since 17 January 2012 by the so-called Azawad National Liberation Movement, with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) elements and other terrorist groups, were followed by massacres and atrocities against civilians and Government forces. By way of example, I would cite the massacre committed on 24 January in the village of Aguelhok and the recent assassination in Homburi on 18 February last. In Aguelhok, the so-called Azawad National Liberation Movement and AQIM summarily executed dozens of Government soldiers who had been taken prisoner and tied up with their hands behind their backs. Some were shot in the head, others had their throats slit and yet others were dismembered. In Homburi, those bandits, in a bid to provoke conflict within and among communities, shot a tribal chief on 18 February last — only a few days ago.

We call on the Security Council and the international community to firmly condemn the almost incessant attacks perpetrated by the so-called Azawad National Liberation Movement rebels and AQIM terrorists, who hope to tarnish the reputation of Mali, which is a democratic and stable country, and to create uncertainty in connection with our ongoing electoral process.

The attacks also undermine the efforts made by the Government of Mali and its technical and financial partners for economic and social development in the northern part of the country, such as the special programme for peace, security and development of the north, which has already allocated \$31 billion CFA francs, or more than \$62 million, to that end.

Before concluding, I should like to thank those States and international organizations that reiterated their support for respect for the territorial integrity and the national unity of Mali. I would also take this opportunity to thank neighbouring countries, development partners, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as all governmental and non-governmental organizations providing humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

In conclusion, I would underscore the intention of the Government of Mali to resolve peacefully the situation in the northern part of the country by means of dialogue, which we have always made a priority, in the framework of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of my country.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Sir, it is an honour to take the floor under your presidency. I should like to convey Algeria's congratulations to the delegation of Togo on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February, and I would ask you to kindly convey our thanks to His Excellency President Faure Gnassingbé for having provided us with this timely opportunity to discuss a matter that is of great importance and relevance given what is at stake for the countries of the region, including Algeria.

The situation in the Sahel and West Africa region is conducive to the further development of existing

regional hotbeds of tension, radicalization and terrorist violence. They are operating in conjunction with the many organized-crime networks in the area that engage in illicit trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings. The worrisome regional situation, which is conducive to the proliferation of weapons, including weapons of war, has in recent months fuelled a resurgence of violence and terrorist attacks, as well as the recruitment of new terrorists.

Algeria, in agreement with the Sahel countries, has consistently advocated an approach that is geared towards targeted and efficient action based on ownership by the countries of the region — Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — aimed at combating terrorism and cross-border criminality while assuming responsibility for security and stability on their territories, in keeping with their international obligations.

Thus action was taken jointly with the partner countries of the subregion to establish mechanisms specifically geared to that undertaking. That involved the creation, in April 2010 in Tamanrasset, Algeria, of a Committee of Joint Chiefs that includes the armed forces of Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, and the establishment in Algiers of the Unité de fusion et de liaison, to enable information exchange. Those mechanisms are part and parcel of the process that was begun in March 2010 and reaffirmed by the Bamako ministerial meeting held in May 2011, and serve as a complement to traditional forms of cooperation among the police, customs and border guards.

The conference held in Algiers on 7 and 8 September 2011 with the participation of the core countries — Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — and extra-regional partners reached a clear consensus and made a firm commitment to combat the scourges affecting the region by means of an integrated approach focusing on security and development objectives, in particular in the most underprivileged areas of the region.

The conference, while stressing the principle of ownership, also emphasized the need for cooperation among the core countries and extra-regional State and institutional partners. A productive process to follow up the consultations held with extra-regional partners, including the United States and the European Union, spearheaded by the core countries and held at the

ministerial level, began in November 2011 and is ongoing.

Algeria welcomes the strong support provided by the Security Council, in its statement to the press (SC/10535) of 31 January 2012, for the countries of the affected region and for the initiative of our core countries, which is reflected in the partnership and structures already set up by those countries. Algeria attaches particular importance to United Nations action in the region, which is being carried out by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa. The work of the United Nations is made more effective by close cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, particularly the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. Those efforts are being undertaken with primary responsibility falling to the countries of the region and with contributions from other States, which are complementary and involve no duplication whatsoever in terms of the activities focused on the West Africa and Sahel region.

In the spirit of that effective and integrated approach taken jointly with extra-regional partners, Algeria attaches particular importance to the approach taken by the Global Counterterrorism Forum, launched in September 2011 in New York, to the Sahel region and to Africa in general.

The regional Working Group tasked with strengthening the Sahel's capacities, co-chaired by Algeria and Canada, held its first meeting on 16 and 17 November last in Algiers. That meeting yielded concrete results, including the adoption of an action plan and several programmes aimed at enhancing cross-border security, legal and judicial cooperation and cooperation among police services, combating the funding of terrorism and reaching out to civil society.

Algeria wishes to convey to its Forum partners, including Canada, its satisfaction at the constructive efforts they have undertaken for the region.

Algeria has tirelessly expanded its efforts to combat the financing of terrorism and to raise awareness of the criminal practice of kidnapping hostages for ransom. That practice poses a challenge that remains of great concern because it provides financing and enables the recruitment of new terrorists, particularly worrisome given its links with organized crime and illegal trafficking of all kinds.

Many challenges remain in West Africa and the Sahel, and they are often exacerbated by alarming events. The links that Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb is trying to forge with armed terrorist groups active in other subregions, such as the Boko Haram group, whose criminal activities have increased alarmingly, and Al-Shabaab in Somalia encourage us to redouble our vigilance and intensify our efforts to take swift action.

To conclude, I would like to note that, in that spirit, the most recent ministerial meeting, held on 23 and 24 January 2012 in Nouakchott — in which Nigeria participated, in addition to the countries of the region — is an excellent example of the adapting of cooperation efforts to the challenges on the ground.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this debate today to discuss the threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel region, especially in the light of the expansion of transnational organized crime and its links to the illicit spread of small arms and light and heavy weapons and to other phenomena such as the smuggling of rare metals, the trafficking in illicit drugs and the increase in cross-border activities by armed groups. Such activities also include terrorist activities, piracy and armed robbery.

Those phenomena, as the Council well knows, are fuelled by open borders between most States in West Africa and the Sahel region and by tribal links among the various population groups and individuals that live along the borders in those States. This situation has subjected each of our States to the direct effects of the security and stability situations in neighbouring countries. Those influences and effects can be both positive and negative.

Several States in our region have carried out great efforts to contain the activities of transnational armed groups. Here, for example, I would like to mention my country's experience, together with the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic. Through close cooperation, we have achieved great results in containing infiltration across borders and strengthening communication channels so that they could be a bridge for cooperation among us, rather than a tool to export violence and transnational crimes.

The Council has also heard from a number of speakers who discussed the regional plan of action adopted by the Economic Community of West African States, which includes practical steps in this regard, similar to what we have agreed upon with Chad and the Central African Republic.

We reaffirm the importance of having the participation of the international community, specifically the United Nations and international partners such as the World Bank, in support of these initiatives, especially since several States in the region were directly affected by the repercussions of the fall of the Al-Qadhafi regime in Libya. We should take into consideration that the Al-Qadhafi regime was a strong supporter of many destructive activities and a sponsor of many armed groups. Those groups supported his brigades during the Libyan revolution. After the fall of that regime, those groups infiltrated the borders of neighbouring countries, such as the Sudan, with all their weapons and ammunitions.

In this context, I would like to recall the complaint lodged by the Sudan to the Security Council on 29 December 2011 (S/2011/810), when we explained that there were remnants of the Justice and Equality Movement that were active in Darfur and which had crossed with all of their weapons and ammunitions into the State of South Sudan. Those forces had been fighting side by side with the brigades of the former regime of Colonel Al-Qadhafi. The Sudanese forces confronted them. However, they escaped and crossed into the State of South Sudan. We informed the Security Council of the locations where these forces are now in the State of South Sudan. I will repeat once again for the Council's benefit that they are now in the Tensaha area and that they are armed with the weapons they smuggled and had received from the Al-Qadhafi regime.

We would like the Council to translate its words into deeds. Those are the organizations and the armed groups that undermine and threaten peace and security in Central and West Africa and in all parts of Africa. Those forces crossed with about 79 vehicles fully loaded with weapons from Libya, including 37-millimetre guns and 40-millimetre grenade launchers. That is a living example of the danger of the infiltration and border-crossing by armed groups.

We had expected that the Security Council would deal with our complaint with greater attention and

grant it the special, urgent treatment it deserves. We hope that our deliberations today will remind the Council of the importance of dealing firmly with such infractions, which constitute a true threat to security, peace and stability in all the States of the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Kafeero (Uganda): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate and for the concept note that was prepared (S/2012/83, annex), which has helped to steer today's discussions. We thank the Secretary-General for his informative briefing earlier today.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to speak about some of the key challenges facing West Africa and the Sahel region, especially the problem of transnational organized crime, which has reached alarming proportions and has become a matter of international concern.

Uganda is concerned by the impact of transnational organized crime on the peace, security and stability of West Africa and the Sahel region. Transnational organized crime — especially drug trafficking, the illicit trafficking of small arms and money laundering — has reached alarming proportions and is a greater threat than ever before to international peace and security. The challenge of combating these crimes is now more formidable, because the networks are increasingly using advanced information and communications technology.

As mentioned in the report of the assessment mission on the impact of the Libyan crisis on the Sahel region (see S/2012/42):

“The Libyan crisis further exacerbated an already precarious security situation in the Sahel region.” (*ibid.*, para. 32)

“Over night, the Governments of the region had to contend with the impact of the crisis on an already challenging humanitarian, development and security situation.” (*ibid.*, para. 64)

West Africa and the Sahel region have proven to be fertile ground for international trafficking networks, which have taken advantage of porous borders and weak law enforcement capacities. Challenges relating to economic development and unemployment — especially among young people — together with

poverty, have only served to exacerbate the situation. If not addressed properly and immediately, the surge in transnational organized crime could jeopardize democratic governance in the region, support the expansion of criminal gangs and terrorist networks and further threaten peace, security and development across the entire continent. In our view, those threats require a comprehensive and integral approach.

Uganda therefore commends and supports the efforts by the countries in the region and the African Union, working together, to address these threats. We are convinced that in order to deal effectively with these challenges and to have a long-lasting impact, there is need for a mechanism that brings together all affected countries and external actors in a coordinated fashion to discuss issues, but with an emphasis on devising solutions and implementing them.

It is also essential to strengthen national institutions and cooperation among Member States through organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In this regard, we welcome the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, INTERPOL and other partners for the ECOWAS regional action plan. That partnership is crucial because it supports national initiatives, which constitute the pillars of any long-lasting regional response.

The relevant international conventions, including the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, also provide a firm legal framework for international action against organized crime. What is needed is intensified efforts to implement the provisions of those conventions by Member States. The international community's collective response to organized crime can be more effective through universal participation in those instruments.

Finally, the proliferation of transnational organized crime is a deterrent to investment and has a negative impact on the economies of afflicted countries. Those countries will find it difficult to overcome the combined effect of the impact of the various threats unless there is sustained vigilance, information sharing and comprehensive enforcement measures, with support from the international

community. It is therefore critical that the actions and responses to counter these threats, at the national, subregional and regional levels, as well as by the United Nations system and the wider international community, be comprehensive and well coordinated.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

Before closing the meeting, I would like, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna

Gnassingbé, President of the Togolese Republic, to thank everyone here today for demonstrating a strong interest in the issue of security, which calls to all of us. All of today's productive statements point to a path for some day eradicating the scourge of transnational organized crime.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.