



Bureau des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et le Sahel

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United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

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PRESS RELEASE

BRIEFING OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL, MAHAMAT SALEH ANNADIF, TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

West Africa is struggling with insecurity, which risks reversing hard-won advances

Dakar, 10 January 2022— The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF, briefed today by videoconference the United Nations Security Council on the latest Secretary-General report on the activities of UNOWAS. The report covers the period from 18 June 2021 to 21 December.

On the political front, the region has made democratic progress, including the successful elections in Cabo Verde and The Gambia. "Despite all the justified concerns raised by the current turbulence in democratic governance, these examples confirm the appeal of democracy, as the surest way for shaping the future of communities," Mr. ANNADIF told members of the Security Council. The Special Representative also welcomed the progress made by the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in charge of implementing the judgment of the International Court of Justice on the border conflict between the two countries, since its creation in 2002. "These achievements are positive examples of conflict resolution, concretely demonstrating how the peaceful settlement of border disputes can strengthen trust and bilateral cooperation between neighboring countries."

"It is certain that West Africa and the Sahel continue to make progress in several areas. However, insecurity in the subregion is jeopardizing these hard-won gains," said Mr. ANNADIF. Despite national, regional, and international efforts, the security situation remained complex and challenging. Violent extremist groups continued expanding their scope of operations in the Sahel, notably in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Niger, targeting both civilians and security forces. "In Nigeria, renewed crime and conflict between farmers and herders has diverted attention from extremist violence in the north-east, which remains pervasive. Other incidents, albeit small, in northern Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Togo

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demonstrate that the much-discussed threat of terrorist acts moving from the Sahel to the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea is a reality," the Special Representative stressed.

Mr. ANNADIF also listed the consequences of security developments, the major effect of which is the multifaceted humanitarian crisis in the region, "characterized by rising food prices, increased poverty due to COVID-19 and loss of crops due to drought".

On the issue of climate change, Mr. ANNADIF mentioned the need for a long-term approach and informed of UNOWAS' support for the development of climate degradation and adaptation strategies in the West Africa and Sahel region. "This is to protect the most vulnerable who are victims of humanitarian emergencies and the resulting security deterioration," he added.

The Special Representative called for a greater engagement in the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Youth Agenda for Peace and Security. "Although more than 50% of voters in the sub-region are women, their significant presence in decision-making bodies is slow to materialize," said Mr. ANNADIF. "There is a need for a greater political will, including funding from national budgets for the action plans," he noted.

The Special Representative reiterated UNOWAS' commitment to continue to support national and regional actors to strengthen peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel.

For more information on the SG report:

[Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel](#)

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