



UNOWAS Magazine

Together for Peace

Quarterly Magazine of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

Young people,
the engine of change



UNOWAS

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
FOR WEST AFRICA
AND THE SAHEL

BUREAU DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST
ET LE SAHEL

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Leonardo Santos SIMAO

Special Representative of the United Nations
Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel
and Head of UNOWAS/CNMC

Young people, the engine of change

While the sub-region continues to face many complex challenges in an equally complex and difficult global economic and geopolitical context, strong and determined voices, full of energy and hope, are being heard despite the deafening din of “bad news” reported almost daily by the media.

These are the voices of young West African women and men who are committing themselves with enthusiasm and responsibility to help build a better future for their countries and the entire sub-region. Aware of the nature of the challenges and the usefulness of their involvement, young women and men are now key players in economic and political development. They already play a leading role, and want to continue to do so in resolving all the major issues facing the societies and governments of the countries in the sub-region.

This is indeed the meaning of our commitment to young women and men, through the implementation, in partnership with ECOWAS, of Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security.

The 3rd Annual West Africa and Sahel Youth Forum, organized last July in Mindelo, São Vicente Island, in partnership with ECOWAS and the government of the Republic of Cabo Verde on the theme: “Empowering young women and men through quality education, decent work and innovative solutions to make conflict prevention more effective in maintaining peace and security in the region,” and the Mindelo Call to Action that crowned the Forum’s three days of work, testify to the growing role of young people and the need to include their vision in the treatment of subjects linked in particular to Peace and Security.

The holding in Accra last August of the annual meeting of the Women, Youth, Peace and Security Working Group in West Africa and the Sahel, a coordination mechanism for the implementation of Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015), organized in collaboration with our partners, UN Women and ECOWAS, illustrates our ongoing commitment to supporting an inclusive, multi-actor platform where women and youth act for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in West Africa and the Sahel.

As UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has pointed out, young people have become a driving force for societal change through social mobilization—pushing for climate action, seeking racial justice, promoting gender equality and demanding dignity for all.

Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in Action

Activities

Achievements

Facilitating the withdrawal of troops and transfer of authority in Lake Chad area, along the land boundary and in the Bakassi Peninsula

The CNMC facilitated the peaceful transfer of authority over Bakassi to Cameroon through the Greentree Agreement, in accordance with the judgment of the International Court of Justice.

Demarcation of the land boundary and delimitation of the maritime boundary between the two countries

2,050 kilometers of demarcation have been surveyed and approved by Cameroon and Nigeria out of a total of approximately 2,100 kilometers

Delineation of the maritime boundary in accordance with the Judgement of the International Court of Justice

Out of a total of 2696 pillars to be built, 1673 pillars have already been built and placed

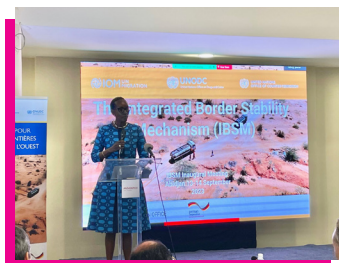
Addressing the situation of local populations in boundary areas affected by the demarcation activities

The CNMC, in liaison with partners, has developed confidence building programs to mitigate the impacts caused by the demarcation.

Making recommendations on confidence-building measures aiming at promoting peaceful cross-border cooperation

The Mixed Commission also approved the recommendations for crossborder cooperation on hydrocarbon deposits straddling the maritime boundary

Deputy Special Representative Biha concluded a three-day visit to Abidjan



DSRSG Biha, visited Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 13 to 15 September. The objective of the visit was to participate in the launch of the Integrated Border Stability Mechanism (IBSM) for West Africa, jointly organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Office of Counterterrorism (UNOCT) to strengthen border governance and security in areas strategic to regional stability. During her visit, Ms. Biha met the Minister of the Interior and Security, Diomande Vagondo; the Minister Delegate to the Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Diaspora, Léon Kacou Adom; the Minister of Reconciliation and National Cohesion, Kouadio Konan Bertin, and the Mediator of the Republic, Mr. Adama Toungara. Ms. Biha also met with the Representative of the Mano River Union, Angui Assoikon, and the United Nations country team

UNOWAS supports the annual meeting of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel




The annual meeting of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel (WGWYPS-WAS), organized by UNOWAS, with the support of UN Women, the UNRCO from Ghana, the National Peace Council from Ghana, and UNDP, held in Accra, from 18 to 22 September under the theme “Unconstitutional seizure of power and transitions in the Sahel region”. The aim of this event is to strengthen the understanding and coordination of action in the implementation and follow-up of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 2250 (2015), and subsequent ones on women, youth, peace, and security. Moreover, this year’s annual meeting aimed at proposing strategies for greater involvement of women and youth in political dialogue in the ongoing crisis in the region.

UNOWAS organized two sessions at the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi



At the Africa Climate Summit held in Nairobi from 4 to-8 September to discuss the state of climate change in Africa. UNOWAS organized two sessions. The first, jointly organized with UNOCA, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, and NORCAP (part of the Norwegian Refugee Council) focused on “Climate, Peace and Security in West and Central Africa: Towards relevance, Effectiveness and Alignment”. The second session, organized with the Regional UN Working Group on Climate Change, Environment Security, and Development, IOM, UN Framework Convention for Climate Change, and UNEP was titled: “Towards concrete and people centered climate action in West Africa: the role of dialogue and collaboration”.

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT UNOWAS

-  UNOWAS, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, was established in 2002 as a regional special political mission of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and Peacebuilding (DPPA).
-  UNOWAS is headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. Ms. Giovane BIHA is the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Officer in Charge of UNOWAS/CNMC.
-  UNOWAS is mandated by the Security Council to act for the prevention and resolution of crises and conflicts through an active role in preventive diplomacy, good offices, and political mediation.
-  UNOWAS implements its mandate in 16 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo-Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and (Chad).
-  UNOWAS works closely with the various United Nations entities including regional and international partners such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Mano River Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Group of Five for the Sahel and the African Union, to consolidate peace and prevent conflicts.
-  UNOWAS supports the 16 countries in their efforts to consolidate good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention and management initiatives.
-  UNOWAS contributes to the analysis and assessment of the impact of climate change on security and stability in the sub-region. UNOWAS also supports sub-regional institutions and States in their efforts to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security in the sub-region.
-  UNOWAS contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) to support the countries of the Sahel facing multiple challenges such as, security, development, the management of the effects of climate change and the promotion of sustainable development.
-  Special Representative of the Secretary-General is also the Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CMCN), created to facilitate the implementation of the judgment rendered in 2002 by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.
-  CNMC supports the work of border demarcation between Cameroon and Nigeria. It also supports the response to the needs of populations affected by the demarcation. Since its creation, CNMC has been able to demarcate 2050 km out of an estimated borderline of 2100 km.

West African youth call for action

In cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the government of the Republic of Cabo Verde, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) has organized the 3rd annual West Africa and Sahel Youth Forum on the island of Mindelo (São Vicente), Cabo Verde.



SRSG Simão talks to young people at the Mindelo Youth Forum

After Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), in December 2018, and Abuja (Nigeria), in December 2021, the island of Mindelo (São Vicente), in Cabo Verde hosted the third annual West Africa and Sahel Youth Forum from July 13 to 15. This third edition is part of the annual forums of young women and men for peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel, which are part of UNOWAS' commitment in partnership with ECOWAS to implement Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security.

Young women and men from countries in the sub-region, representatives of the Cabo Verde government, regional organizations, United Nations entities and other technical and financial partners took part in this third annual Youth Forum to discuss the theme "Empowering young women and men through quality education, decent work and innovative solutions to make conflict prevention more effective in maintaining peace and security in the region". This edition was also intended to enable participants to take stock

of the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda and recommend innovative and integrated solutions through the promotion of youth leadership and their involvement in conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace and security in the sub-region.

For three days, the young women and men representing the countries of the ECOWAS and Sahel region took stock of the situation and discussed the measures to be taken to establish

a quality education linked to decent employment, which would strengthen the participation of young women and men in conflict prevention, peace-building, and development.

The various sessions that punctuated this third Forum enabled young people to articulate a series of pertinent recommendations that were contained in the Mindelo Call to Action for youth empowerment through quality education and decent work.

Echoing the importance of the place and role that young people can play in various fields, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the

United Nations for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simão, praised the commitment of the participants and encouraged them to continue their efforts to contribute to development and the consolidation of peace and democracy in the sub-region. For his part, the Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, addressing the young people at the Forum's opening ceremony, declared that "it's not natural, mineral or even financial resources that make the difference. It's you who make the difference. Because it is you who, one day, will manage and govern resources."

"The Call to Action we have just adopted is a positive step that must be encouraged, but we must remain vigilant and mobilized to convert this call into concrete and rapid results", emphasized Natalina Mendez, from Cabo Verde. But Salissou, his eldest, barely 2 years old, like the other young participants, calls for a responsible and sincere commitment on the part of West African political leaders to move away from rhetoric and towards achievements. "We're here and we'll be here again, in greater numbers, but we need to act fast so that we're a force for progress in our region and not a burden," Salissou insisted.



Natalina Mendez, a young representative from Cabo Verde, reading the Mindelo Call to Action

Call to Action



3rd Annual Youth Forum of West Africa and the Sahel

We, more than 100 young women and men from 17 countries of West Africa and the Sahel, participants in the annual West African and Sahel Youth Forum, organized by United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in partnership with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Government of the Republic of Cabo Verde and in collaboration with all United Nations entities in the region,

Gathered in Mindelo (Sao Vicente Island in Cabo Verde), from 13 to 15 July 2023 around the theme: “Empowering Young Women and Men through Quality Education, Decent Work and Innovative Solutions to make Conflict Prevention more effective for Sustaining Peace and Security in the Region”,

AGREEING with the noble objectives of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, fundamentally supported by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020), inviting Member States to take necessary and appropriate measures to protect young women and men, and to promote and increase their participation in all mechanisms and processes of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and decision making,

CONSIDERING the regional and national legal and normative achievements in favor of youth, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007), the African Youth Charter (2006), the Protocol of the AU Peace and Security Council (2002), the Protocol relating to the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (1999), and the various national legislations guaranteeing the security and representativeness of young women and men,

RECOGNIZING the efforts to translate into action the various international, regional and national commitments through, among others, the United Nations Youth Strategy 2030 (2018), the Continental Framework for Youth, Peace and Security (2020-2029), the ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Action Plan (2021-2030) and the various national youth policies and programs, and that there are still many challenges to be addressed,

EXPRESSING our satisfaction with the development, adoption and implementation of Nigerian Youth, Peace and Security Action Plan which aim to facilitate the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) and subsequent resolutions,

AWARE of the fact that Education in West Africa and the Sahel is marked by high rates of exclusion, persistence of gender inequality, with girls more likely to be out of school and boys facing lower completion rates in a few countries, lagging behind the quality of education, affecting literacy, numeracy, and skills necessary for employment and sustainable development,

AWARE that in several States in the Sahel and West Africa young women face unique challenges and vulnerabilities and violation of their human right, while they also possess immense potential to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts,

FIRMLY recognizing the importance of preventing youth in conflict with the law while linking education and labour market and strengthening equal access to educational, vocational and training opportunities for young women and men so they can access to decent work, we:

1. REAFFIRM our commitment to the content of the December 2021 Abuja Call To Action at the annual Youth Forum for Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel,
2. URGENTLY REQUEST all West African and the Sahelian govern-

ments to collaboratively engage young people and civil society for the prevention of alcohol, drug abuse, gang violence, and access to small arms and light weapons, in order to ensure a better future and sustainable development profitable to all without exclusion,

3. LAUNCH an urgent advocacy to the governments of each country of the sub-region to follow the example of Nigeria in the appropriation and domestication of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2250 (2015) and following by adopting and financing the implementation of the action plans on the said resolutions,

4. ENCOURAGE all governments to ensure the development of functional and sustainable quota systems for young women and men representation in decision making at all levels, and to strengthen the application of measures that considers their interests and active engagement in inter-governmental bodies, And we request the following:

Young Women and Men and Quality Education:

5. Enhance the status of the teaching profession: review teacher training, scale up capacity building and focus on more qualitative training, as well as ensuring better living conditions for teachers (in terms of pay, social security, rotation policies in the region, etc.),

6. Facilitate access to school by exempting all school fees, helping families to pay the other costs associated with schooling by subsidizing school supplies (particularly learning materials, which are often quite expensive), and

bringing schools closer to learners, which will also help to guarantee their safety,

7. Train teachers and learners in the use of digital tools (knowledge and mastery) and thus deconstruct preconceived ideas about digital technology, but also about artificial intelligence; promote their use as a learning aid and knowledge transfer rather than a means of cheating,

8. Expand literacy and access to free technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes with a focus on skills for work and employability, including as second chance opportunities for young people who have never accessed or dropped out of formal education or youth in conflict with the law who have been imprisoned and deserve a second change in society,

9. Increase the resilience of school systems through digital and other information and communication technologies in the face of conflict, increased drug trafficking and transnational organized crime in West Africa and the Sahel and epidemics and other disasters,

10. Include social-emotional learning and life skills as part of foundational learning, along with literacy and numeracy, to prepare young people to respond to their own social, vocational and personal needs and to face challenges such as conflict, violence, including gender-based violence, gender inequalities, and sexual and reproductive health issues,

11. Adopt affordable e-health systems -including e-socio and psychological support for young adults who are drug consumers in

West Africa and the Sahel, Young Women and Men and access to Decent Work

12. Youth employment policies and programmes must, first and foremost, assess the potential for productive youth employment. This requires a process of dialogue with young people to identify critical areas of opportunity and potential for youth employment,

13. Develop pro-youth-employment policy frameworks that mainstream youth employment goals across various sectors. By integrating youth employment objectives across all Ministries, Agencies, and sectoral initiatives, this framework encourages the institutionalization of pro-employment measures in economic policies and budgeting processes towards the common goal of more and better employment opportunities for youth,

14. Countries are invited to identify and enhance sectors with high employment multiplier effects, such as both traditional sectors like agriculture as well as emerging sectors like the green, blue, orange, and digital economies. Through a process of youth-inclusive social dialogue, that enables policymakers to understand, consider and utilize the specific requirements for sectors and enterprises to achieve comparative advantages,

15. A concerted effort from governments, private sector entities and social partners, as well as development partners to cultivate an environment conducive for private investment in businesses that predominantly employ young people or are led by young entrepreneurs. This can be

achieved through a combination of incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, or preferential loan terms, alongside initiatives that provide direct support to young entrepreneurs,

16. Governments, in collaboration with international development actors, to place youth employment at the centre of their public investment strategies and policies. This includes using public procurement policies to favour businesses that promote youth employment and implementing Public Employment Programs (PEPs) that directly create job opportunities for young people,

17. Promoting the emergence of young farmers and their involvement in agri- business and the processing of agricultural products (including the processing of agricultural products) as well as in the young entrepreneurs who boost the blue economy (including the local processing of fish waste to produce cosmetic products and/or fertilizers) while a strategic value chain is created in West Africa and the Sahel that can cover the employment needs of a growing youth population in need of finding sustainable livelihoods in 2023-2030,

18. Promoting local consumption through targeted messages on social networks to encourage local production and the processing of local products,

19. Development of the digital and transport infrastructure for young people to ensure their

connectivity and access to AfCFTA opportunities,

20. Access to labour market information, especially in rural areas, by decentralising employment services,

21. Promoting dialogue on employment and setting up mentoring and coaching programmes for young entrepreneurs,

Young women urgency: leadership in youth, peace, and security in West and Sahel

22. Strengthen rehabilitation, reintegration and long-term support and investment programs,

23. Sensitize stakeholders on the importance of partnership and working with young women to promote peace and security, with paying special attention to gender-based violence and reproductive health and rights in the peace and security context,

24. Support programmes already co-implemented by the United Nations Development System and regional Member States aimed at increasing the role of women in the justice, law enforcement or military sectors,

25. Support programmes already co-implemented by the United Nations Development System, regional Member States and civil society organizations aimed at increasing the role of women religious leaders as key advocates for peaceful resolution of conflict in the community -such as the

“mourchidates” programme in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania,

Youth and Innovation, climate issues and Adaptive Solutions

26. Strengthening of climate change adaptation and resilience through bold measures for environmental conservation and preservation to tackle disastrous consequences in the light of the spiral of inter-community conflicts over access to scarce natural resources which undermine peaceful community co-existence; displace populations; aggravate human insecurity especially in the most vulnerable ranks including young women and men and increase uncertainty about future prospects to unprecedented levels;

27. Support the development of the digital economy and youth entrepreneurship promotion as well as to establish or strengthen mechanisms for access to investment and financing for youth start-ups in order to combat forced migration and brain drain,

Conflict prevention, management and participation in peace processes

28. Build the capacities of young women and men in mediation and negotiation techniques,

29. Support and promote Advocacy with national, regional and international institutions for the inclusion of young female and men mediators, including com-

munity mediators in official mediation missions,

30. Support and promote youth engagement and representation of young women and men in negotiations and peace talks,

31. Enroll empowering programs for young women and men to develop their skills and build self-reliance to contribute to nation building and development,

32. Strengthen youth-led responses in preventing and countering terrorism,

Youth, peace and security agenda implementation

33. UNOWAS and its partners to develop an online/e-portal platform that will provide hands-on knowledge and lessons to young women and men, enable youth to attend forums and intergenerational dialogues learn more about the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda and how to localize it in local communities,

34. States and their partners to effectively and systematically address violent extremism leading to terrorism in the region by engaging young women and men while ensuring their protection and resilience to the extremist groups' offerings and the disastrous consequences of this phenomenon on human security,

General recommendations

35. SOLICIT on the part of technical and financial partners and philanthropists an increased attention to youth issues linked to their support and accompaniment of States and youth organizations serving development and employability as well as the security and peace preservation in the West African and Sahel sub-region,

36. EXHORT all young women and men throughout West Africa and the Sahel to pool their strengths, efforts, skills and know-how so that in a concerted and synergistic manner we can significantly contribute to establishing a climate of peace and serenity and building economically and socially strong communities, Accountability

37. UNOWAS should develop and implement a workplan that is time bound to ensure the dissemination of the Mindelo Call to Action to reach national governments and stakeholders, promote advocacy and sensitization activities with national governments, youth and stakeholders to promote the Call to Action, as well as include components to collect data, monitor and report progress,

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40. The Government of the Republic of Cabo Verde through the Minister of Youth and Sports will be in charge of bringing this Call To Action to the attention of all West Africa and the Sahel countries for engaging them all for effective implementation of recommendations formulated by participants of the 3rd annual youth forum.

Done at Mindelo on Sao Vicente Island, Cabo Verde this 14 July 2023

The voice of young people from West Africa and the Sahel



We need to take action and to activate our civic responsibility to build a truly resilient region.

- Ahmed, Ghana



I encourage young people to maintain peace, to avoid the ethnocentrism that is the source of many conflicts in the region, and to have the courage to engage in actions to promote peace and social cohesion.

- Massetou, Guinée



The youth of Africa are agents of change and drivers of innovation. We as youth must brave the storm to ensure that we are also agents of peace and security and implementers of gender equality.

- Miatta, Liberia



Even if our realities are different, we must never give up on our dreams! We must focus on our goals, because youth has strength, and that's what the world needs.

Natalina, Cabo Verde -



It is important to deploy all efforts at local and community level so that all young people can become familiar with the youth, peace and security agenda, the issue of quality education and commit themselves to the sustainable development of the region.

Salissou, Niger -



With the right education and training, and the guarantee of good governance, young people will be able to play their full part in building peace, development and the model of Africa we expect.

Bocar, Mauritanie -



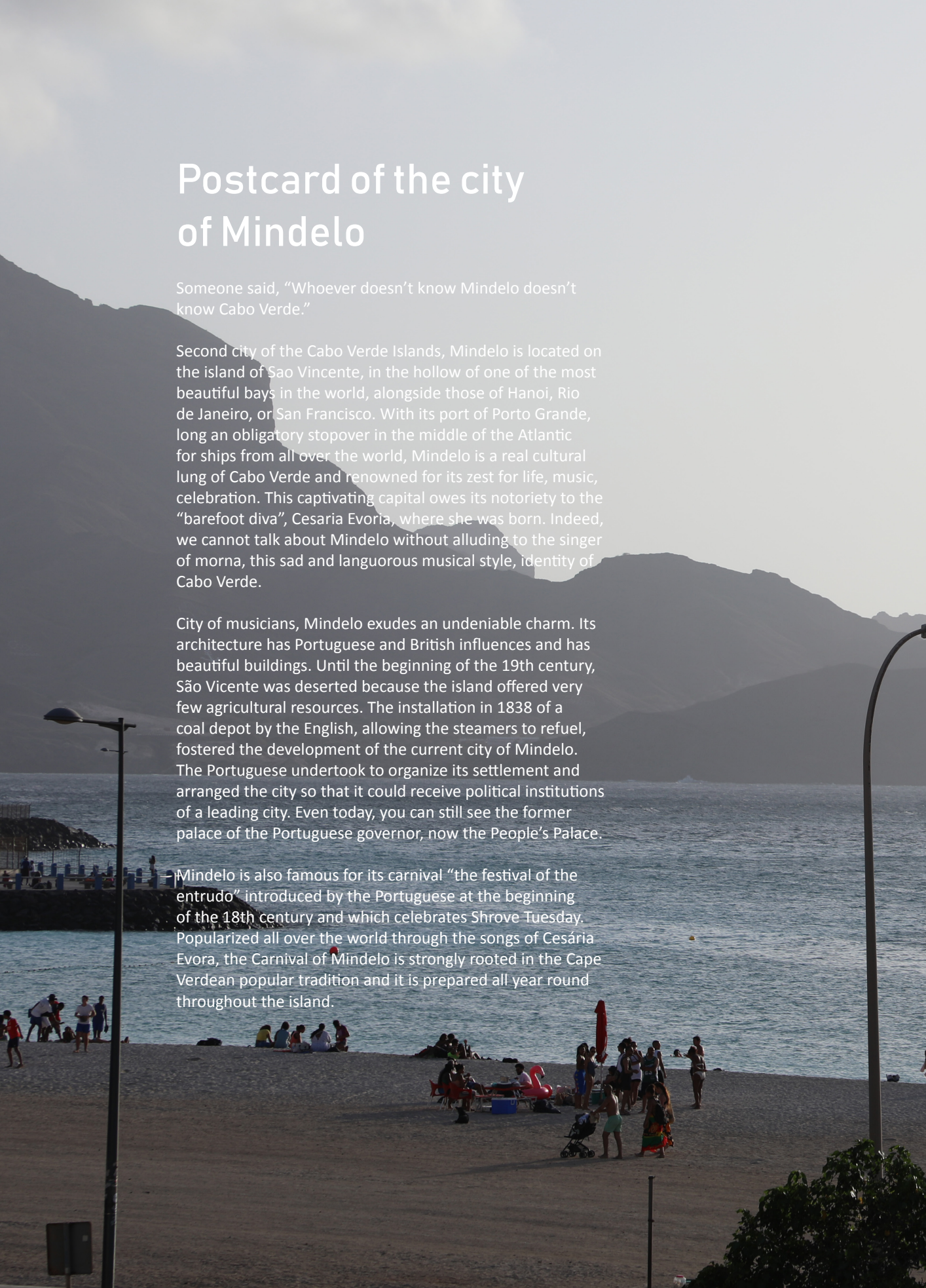
Postcard of the city of Mindelo

Someone said, "Whoever doesn't know Mindelo doesn't know Cabo Verde."

Second city of the Cabo Verde Islands, Mindelo is located on the island of São Vicente, in the hollow of one of the most beautiful bays in the world, alongside those of Hanoi, Rio de Janeiro, or San Francisco. With its port of Porto Grande, long an obligatory stopover in the middle of the Atlantic for ships from all over the world, Mindelo is a real cultural lung of Cabo Verde and renowned for its zest for life, music, celebration. This captivating capital owes its notoriety to the "barefoot diva", Cesária Evora, where she was born. Indeed, we cannot talk about Mindelo without alluding to the singer of morna, this sad and languorous musical style, identity of Cabo Verde.

City of musicians, Mindelo exudes an undeniable charm. Its architecture has Portuguese and British influences and has beautiful buildings. Until the beginning of the 19th century, São Vicente was deserted because the island offered very few agricultural resources. The installation in 1838 of a coal depot by the English, allowing the steamers to refuel, fostered the development of the current city of Mindelo. The Portuguese undertook to organize its settlement and arranged the city so that it could receive political institutions of a leading city. Even today, you can still see the former palace of the Portuguese governor, now the People's Palace.

Mindelo is also famous for its carnival "the festival of the entrudo" introduced by the Portuguese at the beginning of the 18th century and which celebrates Shrove Tuesday. Popularized all over the world through the songs of Cesária Evora, the Carnival of Mindelo is strongly rooted in the Cape Verdean popular tradition and it is prepared all year round throughout the island.





“Cabo Verde’s recovery is a testament to resilience, unity, and the shared aspiration for a better future.”



Patricia Portela de Souza
United Nations Resident Coordinator
in Cabo Verde

Last May, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed Ms. Patricia Portela de Souza of Brazil as the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cabo Verde. Experienced and determined, she believes that Cabo Verde is unique because its robust governance environment sets solid grounds for human security, public service delivery and sustainable economic development. Interview.

You have been serving as the UN RC in Cabo Verde for a few months, what can you tell us about this country?

Cabo Verde is a beautiful archipelagic country with incredibly resilient and kind people. A country that made impressive progress in social and economic development since its independence in 1975. Advancements in income per capita, education, health-care, and significant strides in poverty reduction are unequivocal examples of that progress and commitment towards the agenda 2030. In addition, it is worth highlighting that democracy,

transparency and good governance are strong societal values for the Cabo Verdean people.

More recently, the cumulative global crises, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine and climate change, have challenged this progress, but the Government’s determination to safeguard the well-being of its citizens and economic stability has ensured a strong recovery and a renewed drive towards sustainable development. Cabo Verde’s recovery is a testament to resilience, unity, and the shared aspiration for a better future.

Challenges remain in several areas, but the leaders and the broader society are committed to overcoming them.

What are the main challenges facing the country and what is the UNCT doing to support the effort of the authorities addressing these challenges?

The main challenges Cabo Verde is facing can be summarized as follow:

1) Vulnerability to exogenous shocks. As a Small Island Development State (SIDS), Cabo Verde faces structural



Cabo Verde is unique because the country's robust governance environment sets a solid ground for human security, public service delivery and sustainable economic development.

constraints, such as water scarcity and limited arable land, a small internal market, and territorial dispersion. These constraints lead to the country's significant dependence on external inputs (fuels, food, merchandise, intermediate goods) and external finance (i.e., remittances, FDI, Official Development Assistance), and perpetuate its vulnerability to global economic crises, climate change and international commodity prices. This was particularly evident during the recent multiple and overlapping crises (climate change, COVID-19, and the conflict in Ukraine). The cumulative effects of these external shocks further depleted domestic buffers, business, and household levels (earnings, savings, investments, etc...).

2) Persisting inequalities and socio-economic exclusion, including territorial disparities: Nine groups were identified as at greater risk of being left behind, based on a documentary review, focal group discussions and multi-stakeholders' workshops, led by the National LNOB Partnership and with the strong support of the UN Country Team. These groups are people at risks of food insecurity, vulnerable women and girls, vulnerable

children and adolescents, Youth not in employment, education or training, the elderly, immigrants especially from mainland Africa, people living with disabilities, detainees, minorities by gender identity or sexual orientation and people living in isolated areas. Within these nine groups, subgroups living in income poverty, especially in extreme poverty, are at higher risk of being left behind.

3) While the strong economic recovery in 2022 allowed many labour market indicators to return to pre-pandemic levels, youth unemployment (15-24 age group) remains relatively high with a rate of 27.3%¹, as well as the youth NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) rate. Economic expansion is still highly dependent on a geographically concentrated tourism sector, hampering sustained and inclusive economic growth, which needs to generate more employment for the younger population.

4) Access to concessional finance and diversified sustainable private investments: To recover from these multiple crises, build resilience, and invest in the transition to a blue economy able to continue driving sustainable development, Cabo Verde needs partnerships and investments with multiple stakeholders. However, the limited fiscal space and overwhelming pressure on public expenditure to mitigate the impact of the three crises hamper public investment.

5) Climate change adaptation: As a SIDS, Cabo Verde has one of the lowest per capita emissions of greenhouse gases² and is, however, among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, with the fundamental challenge of adequately managing water-scarcity for sustainable agri-food systems and ecosystems.

Cabo Verde is part of a sub-region which is facing instability and insecurity. Are you concerned about the possible impact on the country? would you say that Cabo Verde is unique?

Cabo Verde is unique because the country's robust governance environment sets a solid ground for human security, public service delivery and sustainable economic development. Cabo Verde has ratified the nine main international human rights conventions and has adhered to the main instruments promoting human rights in Africa. In terms of international labour standards; Cabo Verde has a good accountability framework in terms of predictability and control of budget execution although some challenges remain.

To continue its successful journey towards the SDGs in this challenging landscape at sub-regional level, Cabo Verde will have to rely on its well-functioning institutions and continued public administration reforms, including through digitalization, fostering an enhanced participation of citizens, particularly women and youth, in decision-making processes. It will also need to continue the successful investment in human talent development, maintaining and improving access to quality social services, and diversify the economy. It is also unique as one of the only two SIDS country in the sub-region, and the only archipelagic country.

Cabo Verde can count on its outstanding governance settings and democratic culture. Its solid institutions, human capital – based on education and health systems well above regional average – and social contract are key assets to improve its sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. Due to its uniqueness, the

country is well positioned to share their good experiences on good governance, transparency and democracy with the sub-region, the whole continent and even the world. These are Cabo Verdean assets that should be shared globally – a country with very limited resources that has managed to reduce poverty, ensure universal coverage of basic education and primary health care; and have established a strong culture of peace across the islands. The solid democratic system will ensure that the country moves forward and not backward – the Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento Sustentável – PEDS II-, is a good roadmap to accelerate development for all, working towards the Agenda 2030 targets.

What are your priorities for 2023/2024?

The UN Country Team's main priorities for the coming years, as set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework 2023 - 2027, are as follows:

- Extreme poverty eradication: support the government with the National Strategy to Eradicate Extreme Poverty (ENEPE – 2022-2026) and in

achieving a holistic approach, engaging all public actors (both national and local), private sector, civil society, academia and communities, in close coordination with international development partners.

- SDG localization: accelerate the achievement of the SDGs at local level by fostering and developing capacities of municipalities, implementing multidimensional and joint programmes on the ground, supporting the government and municipalities to build resilience against the climate change impact.
- Blue economy: develop a useful and efficient coordination mechanism among partners and public and private institutions to enhance and scale up blue economy activities, supporting and enhancing the implementation capacity of institutions and civil society organizations.
- Youth: in coordination with the government and partners, including youth associations, support integrated and multidimensional actions to create opportunities for adolescents and young people, ensuring school completion and access to professional education and employment op-

portunities, as well as engagement in the public debate and decision-making processes.

- Digital transformation: support the government and other stakeholders on the roll out of the digital transformation agenda, exploring the possibility of developing and implementing a UN-wide joint programme in this area.
- Gender equality and women empowerment, including actions on gender norms and the social roles of women and men.



Cabo Verde's recovery is a testament to resilience, unity, and the shared aspiration for a better future.



Mindelo Bay, São Vicente- Cape Verde



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



1 NO
POVERTY



2 ZERO
HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



5 GENDER
EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE
ACTION



14 LIFE
BELOW WATER



15 LIFE
ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



Simão completes his regional tour, calls for greater mobilization for peace and development in West Africa and the Sahel

After visiting Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and Niger, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simão, continued his tour of the countries in the sub-region, with stops in Cabo Verde, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Togo, Benin and Nigeria.



Le RSSG Simão lors de ces rencontres avec les présidents du Ghana, du Cabo Verde, du Liberia et de la Gambie

As during the first leg, the aim of the second leg of the regional tour by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simão, is the same: to listen to national and regional interlocutors to better understand their expectations, and to provide effective support through a responsible and efficient partnership.

In all the capitals of the sub-region he visited, Mr. Simão exchanged views

with national authorities and regional partners on how to strengthen the partnership and tackle the many challenges that are holding back development and undermining the consolidation of peace and democracy.

Aware of the efforts made by the countries of the subregion to address the situation, the Special Representative reiterated the support of the UN country teams and UNOWAS for a responsible and effective partnership

to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, he stressed the need to coordinate efforts to better combat the impact of climate change and terrorism. At the 3rd Annual Youth Forum, organized by UNOWAS in Cabo Verde, he encouraged political authorities in West Africa and the Sahel to continue their efforts in favor of greater participation of young women and men in decision-making processes.

But recent political and security developments in the sub-region, marked by the military takeover in Niamey, Niger, on July 26, have underscored the urgent need for action to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis, and to prevent a further deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel.

A few days after the military takeover in Niamey, which he strongly condemned, the Special Representative Simão travelled to Abuja, Nigeria, to take part in the extraordinary summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the situation in Niger. “The unconstitutional change of government in Niger has aggravated a deteriorating security sit-

uation in the Liptako Gourma area, and in the region in general”, he declared in his remarks to the summit.

In coordination with ECOWAS, Mr. Simão continued his good offices efforts to bring about a return to constitutional order and a peaceful resolution of the crisis, in the interests of Niger and the entire sub-region. He travelled to Niamey on 18 and 19 August, where he met with Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine, Prime Minister appointed by the Conseil national pour la sauvegarde de la Patrie (CNSP).

During his discussions, the Special Representative urged his Nigerian interlocutors to do their utmost to reach

a peaceful resolution of the crisis, and a return to constitutional order. He underlined the impact of this crisis on human lives and called on the CNSP to take the necessary measures to facilitate the delivery and access of humanitarian assistance provided by the UN system and other humanitarian agencies to vulnerable populations in Niger.

In close coordination with various partners, Mr. Simão continues his tireless efforts to help find a peaceful resolution to the crisis and facilitate a return to constitutional order in Niger.



Des femmes déplacées pilent du mil devant la maison d'un parent qui leur a offert un refuge à Niamey. Les femmes ont fui les attaques violentes dans leur village au sud du Niger en mai 2022. OCHA/Michele Cattani

UN Heads of Missions take stock of their work



SRSGs at the UN Heads of Mission meeting

On September 12, 2023, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) hosted the 38th meeting of the United Nations Heads of Missions in Dakar, Senegal. The objective was to take stock of the political and security situation, and to exchange views on development and governance trends in the Sahel, West and Central Africa regions.

The Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Heads of UN Missions, respectively, El-Ghassim Wane for the Integrated Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for the African Union Office (UNOAU), Abdou Abarry for Central Africa (UNOCA), Abdoulaye Bathily for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Special Coordinator for Sahel Development, and Leonardo Santos Simão, as well as the Deputy Representative, Giovane Biha, for West Africa and the Sahel, met in Dakar to exchange views on their strategic engagements to better meet the challenges and contribute to consolidating the principles of democratic governance and the rule of law.

The political and security situation in the Sahel, West and Central Africa re-

gions, marked in particular by unconstitutional changes of governments, and the need to rapidly re-establish constitutional order in line with relevant African normative instruments and UN declarations, featured prominently in the exchanges of UN officials, who stressed the need to promote good governance and transparency, and to strengthen the partnership between the UN and African regional and sub-regional organizations in the field of governance.

The Heads of Mission underlined the essential role of political parties, civil society and community organizations in the promotion and exercise of good governance and stressed the importance of the separation of powers and checks and balances, including during constitutional review processes and periods of transition.

The Heads of Mission agreed that, in complex situations, the main concerns should relate to both humanitarian and development aid, as the latter is directly affected in the long term if it is not addressed, leading to recurrence, and constituting a fundamental cause of instability.

Reiterating the importance of the “nexus” approach to peace and security, humanitarianism and development, they called for more inclusive societies and a fairer global economic and financial system that favors developing countries and the achievement of the SDGs, as well as the implementation of the African Union’s Agenda 2063. ([Read more](#))



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Towards an assessment of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and its related architecture after 10 years of actions



Participants at the Yaoundé Code of Conduct evaluation meeting

The UN Resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) encourage States of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), through concerted action, to counter piracy and, armed robbery at sea and other forms of maritime crimes in the Gulf of Guinea. In this framework, UNOWAS, in partnership with UNOCA, has been supporting regional efforts to establish a stable maritime environment.

For decades, the subregion has faced transnational organized crime at sea and threats to the safety and security of maritime navigation, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. These scourges have a negative impact on international trade, energy security and the global economy, and cause loss of life.

In this context, cooperation at the global, regional, subregional, and bilateral levels plays a crucial role in combating threats to maritime security, including piracy, armed robbery at sea, terrorist acts against shipping, offshore installations and other maritime inter-

ests. This cooperation is embodied in the establishment of bilateral and multilateral instruments and mechanisms for the control, prevention and control of these risks and for a more sustained exchange of information between States.

In order to promote regional maritime cooperation and the establishment of a stable maritime environment, and thus contribute to peace, order and the maintenance of prosperity, the Gulf of Guinea States adopted, in 2013, the Yaoundé Code of Conduct for the Repression of Acts of Piracy,

Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activities in West and Central Africa. This was followed by the establishment by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, of the Maritime Safety and Security Architecture. After 10 years of existence, it was necessary to evaluate the provisions and strategies of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct as well as the progress made in operationalizing the architecture so that they were better adapted to emerging realities and threats.

It is in this perspective that the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) decided to support the organization of a meeting whose objective was to develop action plans to evaluate the provisions and strategies of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. This meeting, which was held from 14 to 16 August 2023 in Dakar, brought together a small group of representa-

tives of structures involved in the fight against maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, including the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC), ECCAS, ECOWAS, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, the Regional Maritime Security Centre for West Africa (CRESMAO) and the Regional Maritime Security Centre for Central Africa (CRESMAC) and the Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea represented by Côte d'Ivoire (G7 ++ FoGG).

After three days of discussions, participants developed action plans for a review of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the resulting regional architecture. The results of the work enabled the Annual Meeting of Senior Officials of the Inter-Regional Coordination Centre, held in September 2023 in Abuja, to identify new challenges, achieve optimal use of available resources and define a strategic vision for the next decade.



Elmina Ghana, Photo by Seyiram Kweku - Unsplash

“The Yaoundé architecture and the Gulf of Guinea states must put in place deterrent measures against the perpetrators of maritime offences”



Admiral Narciso Fastudo

Deputy Executive Director of the Interregional Coordination Center (ICC)

On the sidelines of the meeting organized by UNOWAS, UNOCA and UNODC from August 14 to 16 in Dakar to evaluate the provisions and strategies of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, the Deputy Executive Director of the Interregional Coordination Center (ICC), Admiral Narciso Fastudo, takes stock of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. Interview.

What are the main achievements of the Yaoundé architecture in terms of maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea after ten years of Yaoundé process?

The maritime security and safety architecture of the Gulf of Guinea created at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, ECOWAS and

CGG on 25 June 2013 and operationalized since then has undertaken the following achievements:

- It has monitored, controlled and monitored the activities of suspicious vessels or those involved in maritime offences through tools for managing and analysing abnormal behaviour of vessels at sea. This work is regularly

disseminated in the maritime safety bulletins of the various architecture centres to the naval forces for intervention if necessary and to the general public for the visibility of the architecture's activities. The result has been the steady decline in acts of piracy and armed robbery against merchant ships in the common maritime space of West and Central Africa;

- At the legal level, the architecture has endeavoured, with the help of partners, to strengthen the capacities of States to adopt legislation enabling them to deal at all stages with the perpetrators of maritime offences, with the ultimate aim of harmonizing them at the interregional level. In addition, the architecture has developed and implemented a practical guide for the organization of mock trials on piracy in collaboration with partners;

- As training is not left out, the architecture has been able to set up a training matrix whose content is currently monitored by the selected centres of excellence; and

- The Yaoundé architecture regularly participates in regional and interregional maritime exercises involving navies and coast guards bordering the Gulf of Guinea.

The threats in the Gulf of Guinea are multidimensional and in many cases interlinked. In addition to piracy, other forms of maritime crime such as armed robbery at sea, illegal supplies, drug trafficking by sea and IUU fishing pose a real threat to peace and development in the region. What needs to be done at the level of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Safety and Security within the GoG to mitigate these risks?

To answer this question specifically, I would say that the Yaoundé architecture and the Gulf of Guinea states must put in place deterrent measures against the perpetrators of maritime offences. At the national level, States must put in place legal, institutional and operational frameworks, particularly within inter-agency or inter-agency structures that favour inter-agency collaboration in the exchange of information and pool the operational

resources of all administrations operating at sea in order to

increase the presence at sea of these resources. in the context of the surveillance of maritime spaces under their jurisdiction.

At the regional and interregional level, the same collaboration should be encouraged between the Yaoundé architecture and the specialized supra-state structures for the fight against illegal fishing, trafficking of all kinds, the fight against pollution, etc.

In view of the evaluation of the code of conduct, it is possible to make it legally binding to improve its implementation.

The trends recorded during the first half of 2023 raise concerns about the increase in crew abductions even in the territorial sea of Central African waters. What are the possible reasons behind this?

Since the beginning of the year, we have observed phenomena that were thought to be missing, such as the hijacking of ships and the taking of crew members as hostages. The reasons are many, I would say exogenous and endogenous. The exogenous reasons concern the ships themselves and their company because the vessels hijacked this year have mostly been involved in illicit activities. Beyond exogenous reasons, we note that the States bordering the Gulf of Guinea do not always have the necessary capacities to exercise effective control over their immense maritime and coastal spaces. In addition, increased support is needed to remove obstacles to the full operationalization of the Yaoundé architecture, including insufficient staffing, equipment and logistical support, and lack of predictable and sustainable funding.

After ten years of the Yaoundé process, are you optimistic about maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea?

On analysis, it is not excessive to say that enormous progress has been made. The opportunities offered by Yaoundé's architecture are significant. Ten years after the creation of the Yaoundé Architecture and the signing of the Code of Conduct, the Gulf of Guinea States, their partners and regional communities have undertaken efforts that have resulted in a decrease in acts of piracy and armed robbery against merchant ships. Much has therefore been achieved during the first ten years of the Yaoundé process. However, much remains to be done to secure the maritime space of the Gulf of Guinea for the development of a sustainable blue economy for the benefit of our States and their populations. It is in this perspective that the Yaoundé architecture in collaboration with the regional communities (ECCAS, ECOWAS and GGC) and international partners is currently working towards the evaluation of the code of conduct and the functioning of the Yaoundé architecture ten years later. The action plans have already been developed and are awaiting their validation with the Senior Officials of Architecture in Yaoundé.

Communities, key priority for the CNMC



Residents of Garoua, Cameroon

As pillar construction continues to progress and the conclusion of the border demarcation project is in sight, the rights of the affected populations remain a key priority for the United Nations' Cameroon-Nigerian Mixed Commission (CNMC).

Like much of the African continent, Cameroon and Nigeria are both countries built according to colonial borders. After Cameroon initiated court proceedings in 1994 to claim back sovereignty of the Bakassi Peninsula with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), a judgment was handed down in 2002, that required the border between the two countries to be demarcated in accordance with the existing historical documents.

While border demarcation tends to be surrounded by technical language and numerical goals, at its core, this is an issue integrally affecting the lives of local border communities in Cameroon and Nigeria.

How does your country's border define you? Your nationality, the laws you abide by, the land your property re-

sides on? For many, these exist as fundamental certainties. Yet for families living along the Cameroonian/Nigerian border, this is not a simple question.

Inhabitants in villages such as Mogode highlighted the types of issues they are facing during a recent field mission carried out by a tripartite delegation, composed of Cameroon, Nigeria, and the United Nations. During the mid-term review mission of lot 7 of the Project Steering Committee which took place on 4 and 5 July 2023, officials met with Traditional Leaders and the local population to listen to and address their concerns.

In a meeting convened by the local Prefect, the Traditional leaders represented their communities and voiced their concerns. Many Cameroonians explained that their homes,

farms, public buildings and even villages were now considered to be in Nigeria. People's farms had been cut in half while some families were living on opposite sides of the border. Many who had lived their entire lives as a Cameroonians, were now being erroneously told they were considered Nigerian in the eyes of the law.

Acknowledging these very real and visceral issues, the heads of delegation explained that as the ICJ judgment was agreed on in 2002 by the then Heads of State of Cameroon and Nigeria, the court judgment must be implemented. They explained the options this gave local inhabitants: they can change nationality to match the territory they live in, they can maintain their current nationality, or they can move to the side of the border they feel matches their identity, but they must obey the

rules and laws of the country that they reside in. Yet, underlying each option, was the key caveat that any issues or grievances must be brought to the local authority in a legal and peaceful means, avoiding violence at all costs.

Despite the practical nature of the meeting, the main take-away from the authorities and local population was that Cameroonians and Nigerians are a family that cannot allow a border to come between the years of rich history and culture that the two countries share. Peace must be protected at all costs.

As pillar construction continues to progress and the conclusion of the border demarcation project is in sight, the rights of the affected populations

remain a key priority for the United Nations' Cameroon-Nigerian Mixed Commission (CNMC). To assist the border populations through this transitional period, sensitization projects will be undertaken to support those affected and ensure the project achieves its goal of peace and security for the people of Cameroon and Nigeria.

In his capacity as Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CMCN), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Leonardo Santos Simão, recently visited Abuja and Yaoundé to take stock of CMCN's activities, and to renew the UN's support for the two countries in their joint efforts to complete border

demarcation, strengthen cross-border cooperation and launch development projects for the populations affected by the demarcation work.

"The efforts made, and the progress achieved by the CMCN are exemplary. I congratulate both delegations and encourage them to redouble their efforts to complete the demarcation process, and to strengthen confidence, peace, and development among the cross-border populations," said the CMCN Chairman, Simão, adding that the UN will continue supporting the efforts of Cameroon and Nigeria to assess the needs of the populations affected by the demarcation activities, in order to provide effective assistance and improve their living conditions.



Main pillar, near Mogode- Cameroon

UNOWAS supports efforts to revitalize the West African Bar Association (WABA)

In line with its strategic objective to support regional efforts to enhance the respect for the rule of law and human rights, UNOWAS supported the organization of a regional conference of the West African Bar Association (WABA) in Accra, Ghana on 1-2 August 2023.

In line with its strategic objective to support regional efforts to enhance the respect for the rule of law and human rights, UNOWAS supported the organization of a regional conference of the West African Bar Association (WABA) in Accra, Ghana on 1-2 August 2023. The Conference was identified as one of several steps required to revitalize WABA which has been dormant in recent years due to institutional challenges. In attendance were Presidents and executive members of Bar Associations of 14 of the 15 ECOWAS member states (Niger could not attend due to the closure of borders as a result of the coup d'état), the Deputy Attorney-General and Minister of Justice of Ghana (Alfred Tuah Yeboah), representatives from the ECOWAS Court of Justice and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as the UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana. The Conference was organised under the theme "Promoting democratic consolidation through the respect of the rule of law and human rights: Leveraging the role of Bar Associations."

Representing HE President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana at the opening

ceremony, the Minister of Interior, Hon Ambrose Dery recognized among others, the centrality of the rule of law in democratic consolidation, regional peace and security while urging for stronger partnerships between Bar Associations. The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of UNOWAS, Leonardo Simao highlighted the important role of WABA as a platform for consultations, experience sharing and joint advocacy on some topical issues in the region including, fighting against impunity, addressing instances of instrumentalization of the justice systems and amplifying the voice of the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Discussions during the two-day event focused on the following themes: Rule of law and human rights challenges in West Africa; Unconstitutional changes of government and engaging with transitions, the role of Bar Associations; Instrumentalisation of the justice system, Challenges and opportunities for concerted action by Bar Associations; Promoting access to regional justice mechanisms, contribution of Bar As-

sociations; and Enhancing Institutional partnerships, challenges and opportunities. Bar Associations recognised the importance of collective action in order to increase the impact of their efforts on issues such as democratic consolidation, regional peace, security and development. In this regard, they agreed to ensure regular consultations and to strengthen their community of practice with WABA playing a facilitating role. Furthermore, participants reaffirmed the need for Bar Associations to be the voice of marginalised and vulnerable communities and to continue undertaking education and awareness raising on rule of law and human rights issues.

At the conclusion of the Conference, participants agreed to strengthen the legislative and institutional framework of WABA given its relevance to the region. In this regard, an Ad hoc Committee was created composing representatives from Guinea Bissau, Mali and Sierra Leone to lead the review of the WABA constitution which will pave the way for elections of new members of the executive to pilot the activities of WABA in the coming years.