

Commitment from all parties is necessary for sustainable peace in Mali

Many thanks, Mr President and may I begin by joining others in welcoming you to the Presidency. It is good to see your commitment to transparency already in place with the broadcast this morning of the briefing. I thought that was a very useful innovation.

I'd also like to thank, as others have, the Chinese for their Presidency. It was good to see them also being willing to be innovative and open in such challenging circumstances, so thank you very much.

I also wanted to thank Special Representative Annadif for his excellent briefing and join others in welcoming the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dramé to this discussion. It's good to see the Malian government engaging at this level with our consultations.

Mr President, the United Kingdom continues to give its full support to MINUSMA as it works in challenging and complex circumstances, helping to build the conditions for lasting peace and stability in Mali and so, by extension, the wider region. The extent of those changing circumstances were underlined again on Monday by the attacks in Bamba, in which many Malian soldiers lost their lives. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I offer you, Mr Foreign Minister, and the families of those soldiers our sincere condolences.

Mr President, the last three months have seen some long overdue steps towards implementation of the peace agreement. We join others in welcoming the deployment of the reconstituted armed forces to Kidal, Gao, Timbuktu and Menaka. The completion of the first round of the legislative elections with support from MINUSMA and the revival of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, including, critically, the commitments to increase female participation in the peace process. This is welcome progress, but it does not go far enough. We once again urge the parties to the peace agreement to redouble their efforts, continuing to accelerate its implementation. And we hope that when the Secretary-General next updates the Council, there will be more progress to report.

The United Kingdom is also concerned by a number of worrying trends outlined in the Secretary-General's report, including the spread of terrorist activity in parts of the Mopti and Segou regions, increased violence against and exploitation of women and children, as well as increased asymmetric threats against MINUSMA itself. The stark increase in human rights violations and abuses, including among signatories to the 2015 Peace Agreement, is unacceptable. It is vital that the mission reports in full on such violations and abuses where they occur and that the government investigates these cases, holding perpetrators to account.

Of course, Mr President, in addition to these concerns, the United Kingdom shares the concerns already expressed by Council colleagues about the potentially catastrophic impact of COVID-19 in the Sahel. The peak of the outbreak is likely to hit in the middle of Mali's lean season. This could significantly increase the number of those in the region at risk from food insecurity, which we already estimate to be at 13.8 million for 2020.

The UK is committed to supporting the international COVID-19 response, including through further funding, mobilising partners and providing technical assistance. Globally, the UK is spending \$665 million to help in the development of vaccines, treatments and testing, as well as to support the IMF in its help to vulnerable economies. In the Sahel, we are working closely with our humanitarian implementation partners to help them continue their work while addressing the extra pressures from COVID-19. In this regard, we welcome yesterday's announcement of a further \$6 million of support, to strengthen the Government of Mali's response by the UN.

We are also concerned of reports of COVID cases amongst MINUSMA and the MINUSMA team. COVID-19 will inevitably have implications for MINUSMA itself, whether through requests for the Governments of Mali for support in its pandemic response or due to public health restrictions impacting day-to-day operation of the mission. We would welcome reassurance from the SRSG that contingency plans are being drawn up for how the mission will mitigate these possible impacts on core mandate delivery.

In conclusion, Mr President, while we cannot ignore potentially disastrous impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also cannot let it derail or delay progress towards lasting peace in Mali. Intensified political, security and development efforts are required. The United Kingdom remains committed to playing our part in this, including through the deployment of 250 British troops to Mali later this year. A sustainable peace will not be won by MINUSMA alone, however; the commitment of all parties to full implementation of the Peace Agreement and addressing the underlying causes of instability in the region is the only way to assure long-term security.

Many thanks, Mr President.