

Ensuring transitional government in Mali takes steps toward peace process, addresses impunity and holds timely elections

Thank you, Mr President. I'd like to thank Special Representative Annadif for his insightful and detailed briefing. And I want to begin by offering my condolences to all those who've lost their lives in the conflict, including members of the Malian and international forces and UN peacekeepers – recently, French troops serving in Operation Barkhane and including the IED attack on a convoy in Timbuktu this morning.

Mr President, during the last Council session on Mali in October, the United Kingdom called on the parties to implement fully the agreement on peace and reconciliation in Mali without further delay. We noted, in particular, that we hoped to see the transitional government taking steps to assume leadership of the peace process, address impunity and work towards holding elections within 18 months.

I commend and welcome the efforts made over the last three months in these respects by the transitional government and other signatory parties. The United Kingdom welcomes the establishment of the National Transitional Council, the publication of the roadmap for the transition and the consultations now underway on the full operationalisation of the Northern Development Zone.

We also welcome the steps taken to finalise the first phase of the DDR process and to launch the second phase and we hope that this will pave the way for wider security sector reform.

We also very much welcome the fact that, for the first time, nine women have been included as representatives of signatory movements in the Agreement Monitoring Committee. We would encourage the transitional government to continue these efforts, as well as ensuring that necessary reforms are implemented and the preparations for elections proceed without delay.

However, Mr President, much more remains to be done. We remain concerned by reports of human rights abuses and violations, including gender-based violence and cases of child recruitment by armed groups. We hope that the transitional government will ensure prompt, thorough and transparent investigations into such allegations, including those outlined in MINUSMA's recent report on the protests that took place in Bamako and wider regions in July.

As the Secretary-General has said, the cycle of violence can be broken through justice and reconciliation. We fully agree. And we continue to encourage cooperation by Malian and other regional forces with the UN's

monitoring of human rights. This is essential not only as a matter of principle, but as a pillar of peacebuilding and counter-insurgency.

In a similar vein, we also urge the transitional authorities to ensure that human rights and due process are respected with regard to the administration of the current state of emergency and the recent arrests of Malian political and media figures. The safety and security of UN peacekeepers and personnel is also of paramount importance. I agree with the Secretary-General that we need to see meaningful progress in the investigation and prosecution of crimes committed against UN peacekeepers in Mali, not least to send a strong message that such crimes will not go unpunished.

Mr President, I would like to make a final point on the importance of inclusivity. Achieving the core goals of the peace agreement relies on all parties having a sense of ownership of the process. It is very welcome that for the first time, representatives of each of the signatory movements are part of the government and that women representing each of the signatory parties have participated in meetings of the Agreement's Monitoring Committee. This is a significant step towards inclusivity.

We encourage the transitional government to take similar steps towards a more inclusive approach as it works to achieve its other priorities. Including all stakeholders, to help build consensus on how to implement difficult but necessary reforms and how to resolve issues that have led to labour strikes.

In conclusion, Mr President, in the coming months, we hope to see further progress on the implementation of the peace process, addressing impunity and preparing for elections. In the context of continued insecurity and worsening humanitarian needs, inclusive and effective action on these priorities is more urgent than ever.

The UK stands ready to support. We recently announced more than \$10.5 million of extra emergency aid to those most vulnerable in Central Sahel. We are proud to be joining peacekeepers from over 60 different nations as part of MINUSMA. This is a testament to the importance the UK attaches to UN peacekeeping and its role in helping to achieve global peace and security.

I'd like to close by extending my thanks to UN colleagues for all their sterling support to our troops in their first weeks in Mali.

Thank you.