

**Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission**

**“The impact of cross-border transhumance on sustainable peace and development in West Africa and the Sahel”**

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**Remarks of Mr. Jon Mitchell, Managing Director, Conflict, Risks and Enablers Programme, Overseas Development Institute**

Distinguished Ambassadors and Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to attend the Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and discuss some of the key challenges and solutions for transhumance in West Africa and the Sahel in view of attaining peace and sustainable development.

As the concept paper articulates well, the increased attention on the convergence of interrelated factors exacerbating vulnerability and instability in the Sahel region is critical, particularly with respect to transhumance.

ODI has been working on these issues for 60 years and we are honoured to contribute to this important discussion. I will focus my brief remarks on some key points that have emerged from ODI’s recent research with respect to strengthening the response to transhumance related challenges in West Africa and the Sahel.

While conflicts between livestock herders and farmers are a cause of insecurity, clearly in reality, the situation across the region is more complicated.

International donors have been heavily investing in a vast range of projects and initiatives aiming to address these issues. For example, between 2018 and 2022, the Sahel Alliance of donors and multilateral organisations has committed to investing 6 billion euros in 730 projects in the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger).

Many other commitments are underway in the region, testing innovative approaches to address the complex challenges it is facing. But clashing or unharmonized policy objectives can have unwanted consequences undermining projects’ missions in the region.

Our research has shown that if we want to avoid unintended outcomes and maximise positive and sustainable impact in the region, there are two fundamental points to consider:

- First, that regional integration, which is key to economic development and political stability, is also essential in our approach to addressing transhumance-related challenges.
- Second, that development programmes aimed at making transhumance more resilient and sustainable need to account for multiple threats – such as climate variability and change, conflict, and antibiotic resistance – and differences in risk perceptions and prioritisation by using a risk-informed approach.

Policies and investments that reinforce these related processes are the key to resilience and stability in the Sahel and West Africa.

I will expand briefly on both of these points, based on our research:

**On regional integration:**

Livestock mobility and trade strengthen regional integration and are the basis of resilience to climate- and conflict-related crises. Allowing pastoralists to move freely and ensuring trade is integrated across the region can be essential to unlocking livestock's transformative potential.

This is increasingly challenging as climate extremes and conflicts are affecting migration patterns, and livestock price shocks are affecting markets.

It is critical to find solutions that protect livestock mobility, market integration, reduce environmental pressures and allow the sector to be more resilient and take advantage of new technologies. All those involved need to learn more about these complex dynamics in the region.

**On a risk-informed approach:**

There is a need for a risk-informed approach that accounts for the multiple threats and changing development trends that shape the risks and opportunities for pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and those transitioning livelihoods. Portfolio approaches integrating multiple, connected risk-informed development interventions are needed.

Conflicts on the periphery of markets do significantly influence prices. For example, in the case of Mali in 2012, the security crisis sent the country into recession. The livestock sector's growth, initially forecast at 4.4%, dropped to 0%.

But it is not just security to consider. Climate variability and change plays an important role affecting prices. To smooth out these disturbances and leverage the mobility and trade within and between countries, and build a resilient pastoral economy, market integration is key.

Some of the other risks to consider:

Antibiotic resistance and transboundary animal diseases have the potential to impact on livelihoods.

And, cyber crime can undermine efforts to improve pastoralists' and agro-pastoralists' access to finances and credit through mobile banking systems.

Traditional climate adaptation programmes tend to focus on single hazards, like drought, but fail to account for simultaneously occurring threats like geopolitical instability, transnational environmental crime and cyber crime or dynamism in socio-economic systems.

Security initiatives, also often fail to account for interactions between various development trends and multiple threats – frequently only focusing on suppressing armed groups and people smuggling.

These challenges point to the need to bring the focus back to socio-economic development – and do development differently. While climate variability and change and security are important, we can no longer ignore the multiple threats that present risks to development objectives, or that development will lead to trade-offs.

Furthermore, who perceives what threats and trade-offs, and their appetites for risk shape how problems are defined and what solutions are sought.

This requires bringing multi-threat, trade-offs and risk priorities management into development programming, and focusing on taking a portfolio approach including multiple, coordinated interventions.

In addition, ODI's research supports a series of specific recommendations that the international community can leverage to build a risk-informed development portfolio:

- (i) Regional early warning systems, like FEWSNET or Cadre Harmonisé, must integrate critical indicators related to pastoral livelihoods, including climate, conflict, livestock disease, vegetation health and price information. And more should be done to build technical capacity of national and regional bodies to manage early warning systems.
- (ii) Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for livestock insurance represents an effective way to incentivise investment and drive transformation of a sector. Experiences from East Africa have demonstrated the critical role of national government in providing the enabling legal and financial conditions to support private companies to developing tailored products.
- (iii) Review transhumance frameworks including ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance and the 2013 Nouakchott Declaration on Pastoralism. These frameworks should be reviewed and updated in light of the current conflicts and the importance of free movement for pastoralists.
- (iv) There are many opportunities for livestock transformation along the value chain from production to marketing. Rural development and livelihoods programmes in pastoral and agropastoral areas should focus on supporting both crop and livestock production and aim to smooth production across seasons.
- (v) The climate policy instruments of the Paris Agreement offer opportunities to divert domestic and international resources to livestock transformation to make it more resilient and sustainable under changing conditions.
- (vi) And, clearly, it is important to engage closely with coastal countries in West Africa to ensure an integrated regional approach.

While these specific recommendations can be helpful, I would like to end by reemphasising the most fundamental recommendations from our research, which are:

- the importance of regional integration in our approach to addressing transhumance-related challenges; and
- the use of a risk-informed approach in development programming

Thank you.