Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)
on the Impact of Cross-border Transhumance on Sustainable Peace and Development in West Africa and the Sahel

Remarks at the Opening Segment
H.E. Mona Juul
President of the Economic and Social Council

Tuesday, 3 December 2019, 10:00 am-1:00 pm
Conference Room 2
Your Excellency Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Our focus here today is “The Impact of Cross-border Transhumance on Sustainable Peace and Development in West Africa and the Sahel”.

For the past three years, our discussion has been dedicated to the Sahel. A region characterized by multidimensional and complex challenges.

ECOSOC provides overall guidance and coordination to United Nations entities dedicated to sustainable development. It is also a platform for discussing challenges of countries in special situations. And therefore is well placed to discuss the situation of the Sahel region, together with the Peacebuilding Commission.

This year, we have decided to focus our discussion on the specific issue of transhumance.

It is a time-honoured tradition, practiced peacefully in many parts of the world, to the benefit of both pastoralist and farming communities.

In Africa, around 268 million people practice some form of pastoralism. On average, they contribute to between 30 and 38% of the gross value of the agricultural commodities for the entire continent.

However, in recent years, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in West Africa and the Sahel have become common. This is primarily driven by increasing competition over diminishing land and water resources.

It takes place also against the backdrop of armed violence, due to the rise of: organized criminal groups, violent extremist, and terrorist groups.
Along with security challenges, other drivers of conflict include the impact of climate change and pressure on agricultural land.

Limited recognition of pastoral people’s land rights, and inadequate natural resource management, combined with widespread poverty, and weaknesses in governance, also adds to this.

Given the multifaceted nature of transhumance-related challenges, it is of the utmost importance that we address the socio-economic and environmental root causes, at the local, national and regional levels.

Colleagues,

Ensuring the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in West Africa and the Sahel is not only a matter of human rights. It can also provide a good entry point for addressing the long-term causes and drivers of conflicts between pastoralists and farmers.

Several Sustainable Development Goals are relevant in this effort:
SDG 1 to eradicate poverty.
SDG 2 on zero hunger.
SDG 15 to protect and restore life on land.
SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions,
and SDG 17 on partnerships.

To achieve sustainable peace and development in West Africa and the Sahel, we need to discuss how the United Nations can ensure a more integrated, coherent and coordinated response to address the root causes of conflicts.

Colleagues,

Our meeting today is an opportunity to share successful initiatives to address transhumance-related challenges and identify action-oriented, integrated and sustainable solutions.
This month, the ECOSOC is expected to adopt a resolution on the Sahel aiming to help address the development challenges and root causes of regional instability. Including through better-coordinated and effective support by the United Nations and other actors.

This issue is a concrete example of how ECOSOC can effectively work with the Peacebuilding Commission. Together, ECOSOC and the PBC can address the peacebuilding and development implications in specific contexts.

When strategic coordination and integrated support by the United Nations system is required, ECOSOC can provide guidance through a resolution and follow up in a systematic way because of its Charter mandate.

I look forward to a rich discussion on an issue that has been ignored too long.

Thank you.