

## **Remarks for the PBC Chair**

### **SC meeting to discuss the Secretary-General's report on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2020/1074)**

**16 November 2020**

#### **Remarks**

I would like to start by thanking the President and all members of the Security Council for the invitation to brief on PBC's continued engagement in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel region, and would like to take this opportunity to extend condolences to the Mission and people of Mali on the recent passing of former President Amadou Toumani Toure.

- The PBC has been a steadfast partner of the countries of the Sahel region in support of their nationally-led peacebuilding efforts, which include efforts to tackle humanitarian and security challenges while at the same time promoting longer term development, with due recognition for the increasingly important role played by women and youth.
- While some progress has been made in recent years in the Sahel region, including in the fight against terrorism, serious challenges remain, including a deteriorating security and humanitarian situations in some parts of the region, rising levels of displacement, social and economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and cross-border risks including illegal armed and terrorism groups, trafficking in small arms and light weapons and drugs, rising tensions between pastoralists and farmers related to transhumance, high levels of youth unemployment, adverse effects of climate change, low levels of gender equality, and recently reported unprecedented peaks of food insecurity. Many of these challenges have been exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Much remains to be done to stabilize the situation and enhance development prospects. The PBC recognizes that for peacebuilding activities to be truly sustainable, all human rights violations and abuses must be fully investigated, and those responsible held accountable.
- In addition, despite their key role as economic actors, women in the Sahel continue to face discrimination and encounter severe constraints in accessing the resources they need to be key agents of change, such as land, information, finance, infrastructure technology and markets. They also suffer from sexual and gender-based violence, which is widespread in the region.

- The PBC has listened carefully to the needs and recommendations of women peacebuilders and business leaders from the region. Ms. Aïchatou Cissé, the Regional Coordinator of the G5 Sahel Women's Platform called for stronger support to people in vulnerable situations in regions most affected by conflict, who are also experiencing food insecurity due to the secondary impact of COVID-19. Ms. Benbaba Jamila Ferdjani of Laham Industries in Mali called for better access to credit by women entrepreneurs, a necessary condition for sustainable development in the region.
- These are complex challenges which require a comprehensive approach to address root causes of conflict in the Sahel, prevent further escalation of conflict, build and sustain peace, and promote sustainable development. Regional approaches need to be strengthened, with a particular focus on cross-border challenges and the need to strengthen engagement with regional partners.
- In recognition of the magnitude and complexity of the challenges facing the Sahel region, the PBC has welcomed the recalibrated UNISS and its UN support plan. Through its convening role, the PBC has helped to mobilize support for implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), in collaboration with Sahelian countries, the G5 Sahel, the African Union, the European Union and other regional and international organizations.
- The PBC has also welcomed and encouraged continuous PBF contributions in support of the implementation of the UNISS. The Fund has so far approved investments of USD \$137 million in 10 countries engaged in UNISS [Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and The Gambia], representing 25% of the Fund's resources between 2017-2019.
- Financing for the COVID-19 socio-economic recovery in the G5-Sahel countries gives us an opportunity to ensure coordinated humanitarian, development and peace efforts. As discussed in recent PBC meetings, the role of the Stabilization facility in the Lake Chad Basin is a good example of transition from the provision of humanitarian assistance to development and resilience-building, with a focus on improving basic services and empowering local actors and communities.
- The PBC has also discussed at length the growing humanitarian needs and the impact of COVID-19 containment measures in Burkina Faso, while also recognizing the tireless efforts

of the government to address these with support from international partners, including through the Prevention and Peacebuilding Assessment (PPBA). The Commission remains committed to supporting Burkina Faso to consolidate peacebuilding gains and address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in the long-term.

- Through their engagement with the PBC, countries of the region have consistently called for more help from international partners to address the challenges they face, including the need for sustained funding for actions that directly benefit the concerned populations, and better coordination of international efforts, particularly in light of the devastating impacts of COVID-19.
- Given that no single entity has the authority and capacity to coordinate the implementation of UNISS through UN Country Teams and regional offices throughout the region, the PBC has welcomed the recent request by the Council, expressed in [S/PRST/2020/2](#), to encourage joint reporting to the PBC by UNOWAS and the Regional Sustainable Development Group on implementation of UNISS and its Support Plan. We have taken this role seriously and will continue to support efforts to strengthen UNISS implementation through better coordination among the range of local, national, regional, and international actors.
- Partnerships with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, IMF and the African Development Bank, are crucial for the subregion, particularly in the context of recovery from the pandemic. I would like to highlight the growing collaboration between the World Bank and the United Nations on data, risk analysis and joint assessments, supported by the PBF, as well as new financing instruments aimed at addressing root causes of conflicts.
- The PBC remains committed to supporting investments that are needed to address the highly complex and inter-linked challenges in the Sahel, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- I thank you, Madam President.

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