



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8893rd meeting

Friday, 29 October 2021, 11.15 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kimani/Mrs. Toroitich	(Kenya)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Niger	Mr. Maman Sani
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Lagha
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mr. Mills
	Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2021/844)

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21-31275 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 11.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2021/844)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/844, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

Mr Wane (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank members for this opportunity to join the Security Council in assessing the situation in Mali.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation for the Council's visit to Bamako last week, which not only underscored the Council's continued support for Mali at this critical juncture but also demonstrated its unwavering support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The tribute paid to the 243 fallen MINUSMA peacekeepers was a stark reminder of the sacrifices made over the past eight years in the quest for peace in Mali. The tribute also enhanced our resolve to ensure that every one of those lives lost was not in vain.

(spoke in English)

As members heard at first-hand during the visit, the situation on the ground remains extremely challenging. We confront a context marked by increased insecurity in northern, central and, now, in parts of southern Mali and a worrisome humanitarian situation, with 4.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and some 400,000 internally displaced persons, half

of whom are displaced in the central region of Mali. Attacks targeting both Malian and international forces, including MINUSMA peacekeepers, have continued unabated. Just yesterday, our camp in Aguelhok came under indirect mortar and rocket fire. Six projectiles were fired at the camp by unknown assailants, two of which landed inside the camp. Luckily, there were no casualties or damages. In addition, political uncertainty persists, as Mali grapples with the completion of the ongoing transition.

Against that backdrop, the Government seized the opportunity of the Council's visit to clearly express its concerns and priorities. Various Government interlocutors highlighted the deteriorating security situation as the main concern for the average Malian — a concern I have heard time and again, along with a plea for the delivery of basic services, during my own interactions with local communities in Gao, Menaka, Mopti, Douentza, Bandiagara, Aguelhok, Tessalit and, most recently, Timbuktu, where I was on Monday. They also insisted on the need for profound political and governance reforms to create the conditions for credible elections and lasting stability.

In that context, it is needless to reiterate that MINUSMA remains crucial in Mali. The Mission operates under robust rules of engagement and uses all the means at its disposal to implement its mandate, including in coordination with the Malian authorities and other international partners. The Mission has also significantly adapted to the evolving and highly complex threat environment in Mali to protect civilians, including in the centre of the country.

Today we conduct our operations with more tailored units, including explosive-ordinance disposal teams, quick reaction forces and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. We have also established temporary operating bases and launched long-range reconnaissance patrols. These include the conduct of daily patrols in the circle of Douentza, in central Mali, to prevent attacks by terrorist armed groups against villagers; patrols along main roads to ensure freedom of movement and deter further terrorist attacks on key infrastructure, including bridges; and the stationing of a temporary operating base in Ogossagou, in central Mali, to prevent further violence between local communities. This temporary operating base has also enabled the civilian components of MINUSMA to undertake mediation and reconciliation activities, which culminated, a few weeks ago, in the signing of

a comprehensive peace agreement between 12 villages that provides for the free movement of people, the resumption of livelihood activities and the return of social services. We are also holding our ground in Mali's far north, with our camps in Aguelhok and Tessalit, and doing so under difficult conditions. These efforts have been recognized by the Malian authorities and have reassured the population, especially in central Mali.

We are also doing our best to support the Malian authorities in their efforts to address the deteriorating security situation. Between May and October of this year alone, we have responded to many requests for support from the Government of Mali and the Malian Defence and Security Forces for rations, fuel, ground and air transport and engineering services, among others. Support for medical and casualty evacuation provided by the Mission have also proved crucial for the Malian Defence and Security Forces in their operations across the country.

However, we are overstretched. Indeed, all of these activities are being undertaken with our current resources alone. It is in that context that the Secretary-General recommended an augmentation to our operation, including additional assets such as attack and utility helicopters, and it is up to the Council to decide on the way forward, taking into consideration the concerns of our Malian host.

Meanwhile, let me insist on the fact that, irrespective of numbers, significant gaps remain in requirements for enabling capabilities, which are critical to ensure greater mobility and flexibility of the existing MINUSMA uniformed component. Those gaps include medium-utility military helicopter units, forward surgical teams, infantry quick reaction force units and aerial intelligence-collection assets, manned or unmanned, without which our effectiveness in delivering on our priority tasks will continue to be severely constrained. I therefore renew my call on countries in a position to do so, to help mobilize the required resources to make MINUSMA even more fit for purpose.

Although I have spent some time on detailing the military and security response to the crisis in Mali, it should be clear that the answer cannot be purely military. It can never be emphasized enough that addressing insecurity in Mali also requires a political response.

In central Mali, MINUSMA is supporting Government efforts to finalize a comprehensive strategy for the stabilization of the centre while enhancing

its protection-of-civilian efforts. The strategy is expected to focus on the fight against radical groups and to prioritize reconciliation, as was done recently in Ogossagou, the return of State authority, the provision of basic services and the strengthening of the resilience of the local populations, including women and youth. I commend the Government of Mali for the commitment displayed towards the development of that strategy.

Regarding the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation on Mali, progress has been frustratingly slow on the key provisions as they relate to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), institutional reforms and development in the north. However, in recent weeks there have been some encouraging developments. Earlier this month, the Government tabled a forward-leaning proposal on DDR, most notably the integration of 13,000 combatants of the signatory movements before the end of the year and the integration of an additional 13,000 over the next two to three years. In our view, this is a significant step forward in a process that has largely been at a standstill for the past six years. The international community should welcome that proposal and encourage the parties to engage in good-faith discussions, including by convening the envisaged high-level decision-making meeting in order to agree on a way forward. In the meantime, the accelerated DDR, for which 1,800 of 3,000 combatants have been integrated, should be completed without any further delay. I also note the recent signing of a convention for the 16 projects elaborated as part of the sustainable development fund, as well as the steps being taken by the authorities to involve the signatory movements in the institutional reform process. Moreover, the signatories are now more open for international mediation — under the leadership of Algeria — to play a more active role, including through arbitration.

The transition has reached a critical stage. As they have indicated to the Council, the transition authorities hold the view that improving the security situation and initiating some fundamental reforms, including operationalizing the single electoral management body and responding to their people's aspirations to better governance, accountability and justice, are key to the holding of credible elections and ensuring that the return to constitutional rule and stability is not short lived. In that respect, we must note the annual revision of the electoral roll, launched on 5 October, the ongoing work on the draft electoral law and the issuance of three decrees concerning the Assises nationales de

la refondation, including its terms of reference and appointment of members to be involved in oversight and organizing committees.

In the light of the current challenges facing Mali, it is critical that Mali's partners, in support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), make renewed efforts to help the Malians foster consensus, both on the reforms to be undertaken and on the conditions for the holding of credible elections that would mark the return to constitutional order. For its part, MINUSMA is already providing substantive support to electoral management bodies through the Organization's integrated electoral team, comprised of relevant Mission components, the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women, and is prepared to provide holistic support to other ongoing processes. Moreover, through my good offices and in conjunction with ECOWAS and the African Union representatives in Bamako, we will continue to advocate for constructive dialogue among the Malian stakeholders in order to arrive at political consensus on the way forward, while also working to ensure a greater synergy of efforts between Mali and its partners towards the shared goal of return to constitutional rule and the promise of lasting stability.

(spoke in French)

Finally, I would like to say that what the Council heard from the Malian authorities during its visit should also be seen as a plea for a shared vision on how to put Mali back on a path to peace and stability. Despite our collective efforts and those of the Malian protagonists, the reality is that the security situation has unfortunately, continued to deteriorate and the crisis is deepening.

That said, hope is not lost. We have an opportunity to reflect together and develop a common understanding of the situation we are facing, revisit what we have been working on together so far, and further clarify our respective roles and responsibilities, including ensuring greater accountability on the part of all actors involved. I am convinced that if we adopt this approach, we can provide a vision shared by Mali and its partners, which would form the basis of an even more coordinated international strategy to help restore security, promote inclusive dialogue and complete the transition, as well as the full implementation of the 2015 Peace Agreement.

For our part, I would like to assure the Council that MINUSMA will continue to assess and recalibrate

its approach in order to adapt to the evolving situation and better support the Malian people's aspiration for democracy, peace and stability.

The President: I thank Mr. Wane for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Maman Sani (Niger) *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1), I thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane for his constant efforts aimed at stabilizing Mali through the effective implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), despite the various challenges.

Our visit to Mali allowed us to appreciate the sacrifice and commitment of the men and women who, despite their diversity, continue to support the Malian people in their journey towards stability and prosperity. We also had the opportunity to learn about the kind of environment in which peacekeepers operate, with the constraints imposed by us, the States Members of the United Nations. This is why the upcoming United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial in Seoul will be an excellent opportunity for all of us to come together and make tangible commitments aimed at ensuring that the peacekeeping mission is fully equipped.

The visit also allowed us to observe the measures taken by the transitional Malian authorities to address the deteriorating security situation in the north and centre of the country, as well as the social and political climate. We encourage the authorities to continue these efforts in order to meet Malians' legitimate expectations and aspirations for peace and prosperity.

However, the long-awaited stabilization, to which I referred earlier, will require the holding of credible, inclusive and transparent elections within the allotted time frame. In this regard, the authorities and stakeholders have a historic responsibility to urgently agree on the effective implementation of priorities in the light of the road map drawn up by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is also urgent that the most recent decisions of the Agreement Monitoring Committee be implemented, in particular on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and on the decentralization and development of the north.

Like the rest of the Sahel, Mali is plagued by security, development and climate change challenges, which have been exacerbated by the impact of the coronavirus disease. This is why, in terms of security, the A3+1 believes that it is incomprehensible to criticize the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel for lacking autonomy and the Executive Secretariat of the Group of Five for the Sahel for not having the capacity to maintain it, while at the same time refusing to provide adequate support to meet this challenge. We again call on the Security Council to show greater flexibility when it comes to implementing the options it has proposed.

In conclusion, as a first step and in accordance with the options proposed by the Secretary-General, the creation of an advisory office within the Executive Secretariat of the Group of Five for the Sahel would certainly help accelerate the implementation of this joint initiative, which we do not have the luxury to let fail.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Wane, for his briefing. The energy that he has brought to his role is commendable. I would like to express our gratitude to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations staff for their important work in Mali, which I witnessed first-hand this week.

Ireland fully supports the work and leadership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Mali. The announcement of the expulsion of the ECOWAS special envoy, Mr. Hamidou Boly, from the country is a very worrying development.

The completion of the political transition in Mali and a return to constitutional order remains imperative. It is clear that the electoral calendar is in doubt. It is disappointing that the necessary preparations for the elections have not been made. Good governance creates a secure society, which depends on the political transition, as well as a return to constitutional order. We need to work closely with the African Union and ECOWAS to achieve progress on this matter. Renewed commitment to the Peace Agreement is essential. All actors should respect their responsibilities and obligations.

We hope that the appointment of 15 women to the monitoring mechanisms of the Agreement will be completed. Women's participation creates and

strengthens peace — and makes it sustainable. The independent women's observatory will be an important tool for ensuring that women are fully engaged in the political and peace process.

(*spoke in English*)

As we heard during our recent visit, the humanitarian situation in Mali, worryingly, is deteriorating. We find the persistence of humanitarian access issues in this context inexcusable. We see it as essential that all parties respect international humanitarian law, support much-needed humanitarian action, honour humanitarian principles and facilitate humanitarian access. We join the Secretary-General in calling on the Malian authorities to continue to extend its cooperation with MINUSMA in order to enable the Mission to fully implement its mandate and assist the Malian people.

It is clear that, in such trying circumstances, civilians are bearing the brunt of insecurity. As the human rights situation continues to be of real concern, civilians need to be protected. We call on the Malian authorities to investigate all the allegations of human rights violations and abuses regardless of perpetrator. We consider the Security Council to have a responsibility for making sure that that happens. Ending impunity will be integral to breaking the cycle of conflict in Mali and strengthening the import social contract between the Malian people and their State. We welcome the work that MINUSMA is doing to establish a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the key recommendations of the International Commission of Inquiry for Mali.

Before concluding, I wish to reiterate Ireland's support for the sanctions regime set up by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) and appreciate the essential work being done by the Panel of Experts. We look forward to the appointment of experts and hope that delays to this process will end swiftly.

We all saw on the ground in Mali this week that the political transition, on which so much depends, is very fragile. Delayed action will only serve to add to the political and social instability and allow extremist groups to expand their control, exacerbating the suffering of the Malian people. None of us wants to see that.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): My delegation wants to join other Council members in thanking,

Madam President, your Permanent Representative and the Permanent Representatives of France and other countries, as well as other United Nations colleagues, for organizing a successful visit to Mali and the Niger.

I thank Special Representative Wane for his briefing today. I want to begin by praising his work and that of the brave peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in supporting the Malian transitional Government to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, carry out elections and protect civilians.

The United States is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Mali, as evidenced by the increasing audacity, frequency and severity of attacks against civilians, national security forces, international forces and MINUSMA. It is imperative that the protection of civilians remains a top priority for the transitional Government and for MINUSMA. Furthermore, the transitional Government must continue to take credible steps to combat impunity and to ensure that its citizens have a political channel through which to express their concerns.

As the Security Council, we continue to stand with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in calling for the Malian transitional Government to strictly adhere to the timetable for transitioning to a democratically elected Government and the holding of presidential elections on 27 February 2022.

We also join ECOWAS in calling on the Mali transitional Government to release an election calendar, in line with the ECOWAS demands, and to make concrete progress towards organizing elections. That will help international partners to develop plans for supporting the elections. While we agree that governance and corruption issues lie at the heart of Mali's insecurity, the reforms that the transitional Government initiates should either be completed within the agreed transition time frame or be turned over to an elected Government to continue.

We also support the parameters outlined by ECOWAS and reflected in Mali's Transition Charter that preclude the President and Prime Minister of the transitional Government from participating, under any circumstance, as candidates in the forthcoming presidential election.

It is critical that the February 2022 elections be free and fair and administered transparently. We urge the transitional Government to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the elections, including ensuring that women are both on the ballot and registered to vote. We also emphasize the importance of domestic election observer groups as a critical tool for facilitating free and fair elections.

The transitional Government must create conditions for stability and for addressing social grievances. That requires the full implementation of the Agreement. We welcome Algeria's appointment of Boudjemaa Delmi as Chair of the Agreement Monitoring Committee. The United States also calls for the meaningful inclusion of women and women-led civil society organizations in the implementation of the Agreement.

The United States welcomes efforts to support the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to advance the peace, stability, development and security of the Sahel region. We continue to have doubts that the United Nations, regardless of the mechanism, is an appropriate or effective vehicle through which to provide logistical support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We look forward to discussing the Secretary-General's letter, requested pursuant to resolution 2584 (2021), on support options for the G-5 Joint Force, as well as to working with our fellow Council members to identify additional non-United Nations bilateral and multilateral options.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): At the outset, I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Wane, for his briefing, and express support for his work.

After having returned from the Security Council's visit to Mali and the Niger just two days ago, I would like to add a few of my own observations and remarks to the summary provided by the co-leads of the visit, that is, France, Kenya and the Niger.

First, the preparations for credible, inclusive and transparent elections must continue. It is crucial that the transition period be just that — a transition to civilian rule and the return to constitutional order in accordance with the agreed transition road map.

Women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all political and peace processes needs to be emphasized every step of the way. It is regrettable that the representation of women in the transitional

Government remains at 21.4 per cent, which is below the 30 per cent legal requirement.

Secondly, the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali remains the basis of the peace process in Mali. The modest progress in the agreement's implementation is very concerning. We call on all Malian parties to refocus their attention and continue efforts to take concrete steps in the implementation process. Estonia reiterates its full support for the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, including its ongoing technical, logistical and financial support to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform processes in Mali. However, international efforts can succeed only if the Malian authorities will fully commit to achieving peace and stability in the country. That includes adopting and implementing a comprehensive strategic approach on restoring and maintaining an effective State presence across the territory.

It is important to note that all those obstructing the peace process in Mali need to be held accountable. At the request of the Malian Government, the Security Council adopted a sanctions regime to support that objective. In that connection, I reiterate Estonia's support for the work of the Panel of Experts on Mali, and hope that the Panel will soon be fully operational in order to continue their valuable work in assisting the Security Council on the implementation of the sanctions measures.

Thirdly, the appalling human rights and humanitarian situation in Mali needs to be addressed. The constant stream of human rights violations and abuses can be reduced by establishing an effective State presence, including police and judicial presence. In that regard, establishing accountability and fighting against the culture of impunity are central elements. We strongly urge the Malian authorities to follow through with all announced investigations.

Finally, international and regional cooperation to support the peace process in Mali remains crucial. Estonia welcomes the engagement of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States in supporting the political transition in Mali.

For Estonia, today's Security Council quarterly discussion on Mali is our last opportunity for a while to engage as an elected member of the Council. Nevertheless, Estonia will continue its contributions

to support peace efforts in Mali and in the wider Sahel region. We will continue contributing through multilateral training missions and counter-terrorist efforts, as well as through the peacebuilding and conflict-prevention initiatives.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): First, let me thank you, Mr. President, and the Permanent Representatives of France and the Niger for leading our visits last weekend. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Wane, for his support, as well as the two country teams and the Secretariat. We are grateful to the Governments of Mali and the Niger for their welcome.

We heard first-hand, at the weekend, about the scale of the challenges facing Mali and the region. We met heroic United Nations staff in both countries. We heard the commitment of civil society leaders — men and women — to national dialogue and peacebuilding, and the commitment of Mali's neighbours to working together for the stability of the Sahel. But we received some worrying messages from Mali's transitional authorities about their commitment to the transition and to regional cooperation.

The United Kingdom shares concerns voiced today at the lack of progress made by the transitional authorities in preparing for elections. The United Kingdom supports the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and endorses its call for an election timetable to be published without delay.

We all recognize the need for reforms aimed at governance, security and justice, but the authorities should focus on steps required for timely political transition. Broader reforms are the job of a democratically elected Government.

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned about increasing violence against civilians, restrictions on humanitarian access and continued allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including against children. There must be an end to impunity for such acts.

The United Kingdom remains committed to doing what it can do to help address those challenges. As part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), United Kingdom troops are demonstrating how strengthened civilian-military coordination and more proactive peacekeeping can provide better protection for communities in hard-to-reach areas. The United

Kingdom's Long Range Reconnaissance Group has supported United Nations human rights teams to investigate abuses, enabled United Nations and Malian civilian efforts to visit local communities, and piloted models for better intelligence-gathering ahead of operations.

MINUSMA alone cannot fix Mali's complex challenges, however, absent the right political environment. In the coming weeks, we should keep developments in Mali under close review, in the hope that the transitional authorities deliver the timely return to constitutional rule promised to ECOWAS and to the Security Council. Should they fail to do so, there should be consequences. As many said in the Council event yesterday, we should follow the relevant regional bodies — in this case, ECOWAS.

In closing, I would like to share the concerns raised by others regarding the holds placed on the Mali Panel of Experts and a number of other panels. In the current context, it is vital that the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali and the Panel of Experts be able to operate without hindrance, report on developments on the ground and inform Council decision-making.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), El-Ghassim Wane, for updating us on the mandate implementation of the mission and the most recent political development in Mali. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Mali in today's meeting.

Today's meeting is taking place against the background of the Security Council's visit to Mali a few days ago. We thank our colleagues from the Niger and France for coordinating the visit and the President of the Council for leading us.

We had important meetings with the transitional authorities in Mali, including the President of the transition and the Malian stakeholders. The Council also visited the headquarters of MINUSMA and the command centre of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) in Bamako. The interactions were indeed helpful to understand the gap between the expectations of the international community on the transition phase and the political and security realities on the ground. In that regard, let me offer the following observations.

The developments in recent months indicate that the transition process may go beyond February 2022 — a commitment that was made by the transition authorities to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is important that transitional authorities be constantly encouraged to undertake political and institutional reforms and hold elections in line with their understanding with ECOWAS.

The mediation and good offices role of regional and subregional organizations in Africa remains vital in resolving armed conflicts, political impasses and helping the countries in their political transitions. We urge the transitional authorities to cooperate with ECOWAS.

The implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali is an important factor in bringing stability to the northern regions. The transitional authorities and signatory parties need to work in good faith to implement the provisions of the peace agreement. Towards that end, we welcome the active engagement of Algeria, including the appointment of the Special Envoy.

It is evident that the security situation in Mali has worsened in recent months, particularly in the northern and central regions. Terrorist groups, such as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, have increased their attacks. The MINUSMA camp in Kidal has come under repeated attacks, as have the convoys. The situation in central Mali has deteriorated, with extremist groups continuing to take advantage of the administrative and security vacuum. What we could assess from the visit to Mali and discussion with various stakeholders is that a strong counter-terrorism response is needed to defeat the terrorist groups.

The solution lies not in providing MINUSMA a more robust mandate, but in strengthening national and regional security forces and providing them with adequate capacity-building, financial and technical assistance so that they can effectively deal with those challenges. In that regard, we would like to reiterate our call for greater United Nations support for the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, including by providing the Joint Force with the necessary financial support through United Nations-assessed contributions. The Secretary-General's recommendation of a dedicated United Nations support office in the Sahel to provide

support of necessary logistics to the Joint Force could be a good model to begin with.

On the peacekeeping front, MINUSMA continues to operate in a complex and challenging environment. We fully support MINUSMA's role and efforts in stabilizing the security situation in Mali and its capacity-building assistance to strengthen civil and military institutions.

While there may be grounds for increasing the troop ceiling of the Mission, it is important that this decision be calibrated with the strengthening of Malian security forces. The tendency to burden peacekeepers with responsibilities that go beyond the scope of peacekeeping and the skewed approach to get more out of limited resources can lead to further fatal consequences for MINUSMA.

MINUSMA is one of the missions that have started implementing the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System. We call for a holistic implementation of the framework, taking into account the assessment of all components of the mission.

The increasing attacks on MINUSMA camps and peacekeepers underscore the urgent need to upgrade the security infrastructure of the camps. We also call for the implementation of the provisions of resolution 2589 (2021) to bring to justice perpetrators of attacks against MINUSMA peacekeepers.

I conclude by reiterating that the Malian people deserve solutions to the political and security challenges that they have now been facing for a decade. We should encourage the Malian stakeholders to take ownership of the priority tasks of undertaking reforms and raising electoral polity by implementing the election road map and the peace agreement. The Security Council should also consider its support in finding practical and regional solutions to the security situation in Mali.

India remains committed to supporting the people of Mali in overcoming the present political and security crisis.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General, El-Ghassim Wane, for his briefing on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the situation in the country as a whole. We thank the Kenyan presidency, the Niger, France and our colleagues from the Secretariat for organizing the Security Council

mission to the region. We are grateful for the hospitality extended to us in Bamako and Niamey, as well as the candid and substantive dialogue about the situation in the Sahel.

It is clear that improving the situation in Mali, implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, eradicating terrorism and improving the socioeconomic situation depend above all on internal political stability. Further upheavals related to a struggle for power could lead the country into an impasse.

The Council's contacts with the current transitional leadership of Mali revealed the latter's interest in stabilizing the situation. A broad dialogue is being carried out with various social and political forces, including in the context of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, with a view to implementing long-overdue Government reforms. Despite the delays, a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is under way and reformed armed forces are being deployed in the north, with measures to restore peace and overcome intercommunal conflicts.

No one is going back on their commitment to restoring constitutional order, but that must be in the light of realities on the ground, which have their own logic and sometimes require the introduction of certain corrections. We would, of course, prefer the electoral timetable to remain the same, but we understand the difficulties that the Malian authorities face in preparing for the elections. We agree that, without the restoration of State control in many regions of the country, it will be difficult to consider the election results reliable. That would, in turn, constitute a direct path to further political destabilization, which is what happened in Mali after last year's elections.

The security situation remains challenging. Extremists continue to terrorize the local population and to carry out attacks on Malian military forces and United Nations peacekeepers. The Malian armed forces and MINUSMA Blue Helmets continue to suffer casualties and losses. We believe that, despite all the disagreement about the current situation, it would be irresponsible to leave the country to its own devices, including by reducing military assistance. The stakes are too high when it comes to the security of Mali and of the region. In that connection, we believe that the Malians have every right to interact with other partners who are willing to cooperate with them in

the field of strengthening security. Criticism of such actions is hypocritical and disrespectful towards a sovereign State.

It is imperative to continue pursuing close cooperation and coordination between the Malian parties and MINUSMA. We share the view that it is necessary to complete adaptation measures for MINUSMA as soon as possible. We support peacekeepers' efforts to assuage intercommunal conflicts and to protect the civilian population. We believe that decisions concerning the modalities of MINUSMA's presence, including the number of troops, should be taken with due regard for opinions from Bamako. No one can relieve the Malians of their primary responsibility, as they must play the primary role in overcoming existing difficulties.

Our approach to a settlement in Mali must be based on the guiding principle of finding African solutions to African problems. In that context, we support the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union on the basis of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

The situation in Mali is certainly a key factor for regional security. We hope that the decisions made by the countries of West Africa in 2020 and 2021 to step up the fight against terrorism will be implemented. The proposal of the African Union Commission to deploy African standby forces in the Sahel region merits detailed consideration.

We confirm our readiness to cooperate closely with Mali and all international players in order to stabilize the situation in the country and the region as a whole.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Wane for his briefing. I also wish to thank the representatives of Kenya, the Niger and France for briefing us on the Council's mission to Mali and the Niger at the previous meeting (see S/PV.8892).

During its visit, the Security Council conducted in-depth discussions with the Governments of the two countries, which helped us to understand the situation on the ground and the challenges they face, thereby enabling the provision of better targeted help.

China appreciates what was done by the Governments of the two countries to receive the mission. For a long time, Mali has faced multiple challenges. That necessitates bold efforts on the part of all parties in Mali and the support of the international

community. The top priority now is to maintain the political stability of Mali and create conditions for the Malian people to cope with the challenges ahead.

China supports the Malian Government in advancing the political transition and restoring constitutional order in an orderly manner. We welcome actions taken by Mali to strengthen unity through dialogue and enhance the inclusiveness of the Government. At the same time, Mali's political transition timetable must be in line with realities on the ground.

China supports the continued mediation efforts by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States and encourages regional organizations to strengthen communication with the Malian authorities so as to increase mutual trust and form synergies.

China is concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Mali. It is necessary to promote the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and strive to achieve more results on issues such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the redeployment of military forces and the northern development zone.

Efforts must be made in the political, economic, legal and social spheres to help Mali restore State authority throughout the country, reduce poverty and remove the root causes of conflict. The international community and partner countries should continue to support Mali in the fight against terrorism, the maintenance of stability and the protection of civilians. Relevant countries should enhance their communication and coordination with Mali in the reorganization and drawdown of military deployments in Mali in order to avoid a security vacuum that could give rise to negative effects.

China commends the efforts of Special Representative Wane to overcome difficulties and actively fulfil his mandate. Since the beginning of the year, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has faced a significant increase in security risks and has been frequently attacked by terrorist forces. The loss of Egyptian peacekeepers in the attack last month is distressing.

It is necessary to implement resolution 2518 (2020) and, based on the situation on the ground, identify the weak links in the security and safety of peacekeepers and address the most challenging problems in that

respect. Active steps and targeted measures should be taken to enhance situational awareness, protection of camp sites, emergency response and rescue capabilities in peacekeeping operations and address the threats posed by improvised explosive devices.

China is ready to work with the Secretariat and the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations Peacekeepers and will undertake active efforts to that end.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I too would like to thank Special Representative Wane for his briefing, not least his insights and valuable support during our visit to Bamako. We touched upon a lot of issues during the trip, so I will keep my remarks brief.

Our main takeaway from the visit was the urgent need for the current leaders to move in the direction of constitutional Government and rule of law. The need for political and institutional reforms is also apparent, but in order to keep the foundations for peace, it will be key to keep the transition process on track.

After two coups, the transitional leaders now have a huge responsibility towards the Malian people. Their political decisions will also be consequential for the security situation of the broader region. Let me highlight two issues: the democratic transition and the protection of civilians, in particular children.

First, with regard to the democratic transition, the only way to ensure legitimacy for key political reform is to hand over power to a civilian-led Government. We would strongly advise Mali's transitional authorities to never lose sight of that fact. That means putting forward a credible plan for how and when elections will take place. The Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the Council and Mali's own Transition Charter have all been clear on the issue. In addition, the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was signed by all parties and must be respected. We call on all actors to speed up and scale up its implementation across the whole country. Building on some positive examples, inclusivity must also continue to be enhanced, including for women.

Secondly, concerning the protection of civilians, Norway is alarmed by increasing attacks against civilians and human rights violations and abuses. The number of internally displaced people in Mali has also quadrupled in two years. Thanks not least to the strong leadership of the Niger, earlier today the Council

adopted resolution 2601 (2021), on the protection of education in conflict. Let me stress that close to half a million children in Mali alone are affected by almost 1,600 schools remaining closed. Without schools, children are more vulnerable to abuse and recruitment and use by armed groups. We welcome the fact that all signatory parties have now joined the Action Plan Against the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict. We also commend Mali for signing the Safe Schools Declaration. The Declaration was the topic of an international conference in Abuja this week. Norway stands ready to further support Mali's efforts on those important issues.

Finally, let me also express our support to the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017) concerning Mali and its Panel of Experts. It is important that its work, which is mandated by the Security Council, be allowed to continue. We are concerned about the delayed appointments of new Experts and encourage a swift resolution of that issue.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mali.

Mr. Konfourou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on the exemplary manner in which Kenya, your country, is presiding over the Security Council in the month of October, and to assure you of Mali's full support.

I would also like to highlight the recent visit by members of the Council to Mali and the Niger. I would like to thank members for taking the opportunity to visit our countries and listen to us talk about the numerous challenges faced by our countries and the Sahel.

Lastly, allow me to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his continued commitment to peace and stability in Mali and the Sahel.

The Malian delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Mali (S/2021/844). I would like to thank Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), for his briefing. I also take full note of members' observations and concerns.

Just five days ago, members of the Council were in Bamako and had the opportunity to meet and have discussions with transitional authorities and all Malian

parties about the political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation in the country. Members were able to hear about the multiple challenges that Mali continues to face, as well as expectations for the weeks and months ahead.

As members know, repetition can be a useful pedagogical tool. Therefore, I will attempt to reiterate some of the major concerns and observations of the Malian Government, not only concerning the report of the Secretary-General but also with regard to the recent Council visit to Bamako.

Logically, I shall begin with the security situation. The President of the transitional Government, His Excellency Colonel Assimi Goïta, and the Head of Government, Choguel Kokalla Maïga, and all Malian interlocutors whom Council members met were unanimous in acknowledging that, regrettably, the security situation in Mali is deteriorating day by day, despite our efforts at the national level and the considerable international military presence, in our country since 2013.

Malians need security. They demand that their Government take rigorous measures to protect them against barbaric and indiscriminate attacks. That is why the transitional authorities remain committed to efforts to recruit, train, equip and build the operational capacities of the Malian Defence and Security Forces, as we firmly believe that it is our main responsibility, and we will continue to do so.

However, I must also state that the exasperation of my fellow Malians, caused by the deterioration of the security situation, is also directed at Malian partners, including MINUSMA, the French Operation Barkhane and others. I underscore that we are not opposed to international forces. On the contrary, Malians are very grateful for the considerable human, material and financial sacrifice made by the international community to restore peace in our country.

Nonetheless, the Malian people demand that we work together to allow the Malian State to restore its authority across the national territory. It is a prerequisite that will enable Malians to live in security and dignity, in their cities and rural areas alike.

Through such dynamic cooperation, Malians will be better able to understand the value-added of MINUSMA and other international forces. In those conditions, we can make a major contribution to

improving the humanitarian and human rights situation in Mali. Lastly, it is also the best strategy for containing the threats and manifold security challenges and preventing their spread to other countries of the region.

During the visit of Council members to Bamako, my authorities explained in detail the disastrous consequences of the deteriorating security situation in Mali. Hundreds of thousands of my fellow nationals have been forced to flee their areas of origin and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, which I thank here, or are internally displaced in large cities in Mali. The destruction and occupation of school infrastructure, which several speakers mentioned earlier today, have led to the closure of 1,300 schools in northern and central Mali and the dropout of thousands of children. More than 9,000 teachers are also out of work. Basic social services no longer provided in the areas concerned and public administration has had to retreat for security reasons.

The worrisome security situation exacerbates the humanitarian crisis in Mali. In areas of the country with the best agricultural and other productivity, the working population is prevented by various criminal groups from engaging in crop and livestock farming, fishing and trade.

At the same time, Malians are hungry for political and institutional reform that can guarantee lasting institutional stability and a better future for our people. That legitimate demand from our fellow countrymen and women has received positive feedback from the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who, in October 2018, following their information-gathering mission on the post-electoral crisis, recommended that in-depth reform be undertaken in Mali.

Members can see that ECOWAS is of the view that political and institutional reforms are vital. It is true that the Government remains aware of the commitments made and the stated time frames. However, transitional authorities remain resolved to lay the foundations for some reforms — not all of them, in particular those that can guarantee inclusive, transparent and credible elections. That is a necessary step if we want to spare Mali new pre- or post-electoral crises, with unpredictable consequences for lasting stability in the country and for the stability of institutions. That is the purpose of the Assises nationales de la refondation, the national reform dialogue, to be held from November

to December 2021. The Panel members of the Assises nationales, as well as those of the national organization commission were appointed and instated on 26 October.

At the end of the Assises nationales, an electoral timetable will be presented to ECOWAS. I note that the Government is already working hard to ensure the proper preparations for the upcoming elections, particularly through the establishment of the single electoral management body, whose members are expected to be appointed in November; the revision of the electoral rolls, which began on 1 October 2021 and will continue until 31 December 2021; the special voter registration operations, including in Mali's diplomatic and consular missions; and, above all, the adoption of the electoral law by the National Transition Council next month.

On the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation on Mali, which emerged from the Algiers process, I would first like to recall that the transitional Government is fully aware that the sustainable stabilization of Mali also depends on the Agreement's implementation.

The forty-fifth session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, held in Bamako on 5 October, offered the Malian parties the opportunity to renew their commitments to the completion of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In that regard, I recall that out of 3,000 ex-combatants to be reintegrated under the signatory movements and for the sake of inclusiveness, 1,840 have already been integrated into the reconstituted national army. The Government intends to integrate the remaining 1,160 as soon as it receives the list of representatives of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad.

In addition, the Government of Mali remains willing to soon integrate other ex-combatants of the signatory movements into the country's armed and security forces, civil service and the paramilitary bodies, provided the funding is available within the national budget. In addition, we have taken steps to increase the representation of women in all the mechanisms for the implementation of the agreement. As of today, nine women are already on the Agreement Monitoring Committee and three more are expected to join them, bringing the number of women to 12.

With regard to the current situation in central Mali, it is important to note that it is an extension of the instability created in the northern regions.

To address it, the Government is finalizing a new integrated management strategy for central Mali. The strategy includes political and security measures, in particular the strengthening of the security apparatus in the centre and planned dialogue with moderate compatriots in order to remove them from radical, often foreign, extremist groups. We believe that these measures are likely to create a favourable environment for the return of administrative and social services to the abandoned areas.

On the question of increasing the number of MINUSMA troops and police, I would like to stress once again that there is no anti-MINUSMA sentiment in Mali. However, there is a strong desire for peace and a thirst for security among the Malian people, who demand the effectiveness of the political and military instruments put in place. Mali has become an overmilitarized country, but it is paradoxically very vulnerable to terrorism and other forms of organized crime.

That is why the Government of Mali is requesting intensive consultations, especially at the operational level, to better appreciate the relevance of the MINUSMA troop surge initiative. We want to better understand its added value, its effectiveness and its coordination with our own forces on the ground; and we call for more joint actions and operations on the ground. I would like to stress the need to adapt MINUSMA's mandate to the real security needs of Mali. In that respect, we call for the deployment of rapid intervention brigades capable of carrying out operations to protect the population against extremist threats.

I would like to stress that the Government remains firmly committed to respecting and ensuring respect for human rights, both for national and international forces. To that end, the Malian justice system is automatically informed of all reported human rights violations. The Court of Assizes in Bamako is currently holding a session specifically devoted to cases of terrorism and human rights violations is currently being held in Bamako. Similarly, just a few months ago, the Mopti Court of Assizes convicted 12 individuals implicated in the attacks in Koulogon Peuhl, in the Bankass cercle, which resulted in the death of 37 people. This shows the Malian Government's commitment, despite the many challenges, to spare no effort in the fight against impunity.

It is true, however, that the security situation on the ground, the absence of competent public services in certain localities and the lack of expertise in certain areas do not allow for the rapid completion of certain procedures. I therefore take this opportunity to call for more support — in the form of training, equipment, expertise and adequate funding — from the international community in order to help Mali meet these challenges.

The Government remains concerned about the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Mali due to growing insecurity. We are saddened to see hundreds of thousands of Malians in refugee camps in neighbouring countries or in camps for internally displaced persons. This humanitarian situation could be further aggravated by this year's poor rainy season and the growing insecurity in the central regions of the country, which are the primary production areas. With the support of bilateral and multilateral partners, the Government is working to create the right conditions for the safe and dignified return of our people and to alleviate their suffering, including with a view to ensuring their participation in the upcoming general elections in Mali.

Speaking of the regional dimension, the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), with its two pillars of security and development, constitutes a comprehensive, adequate and sustainable response to the multiple challenges of our common space.

That is why we reiterate our call to the Security Council for a robust mandate — under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and for predictable and sustainable financing of the Joint Force, including through the United Nations, in order to ensure the full operationalization of the Joint Force. We also support

the proposal to create a United Nations support office for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

Certain Council members made reference to and lamented the departure of the ECOWAS representative from Mali. I note that the Government was forced to take that extreme measure against the individual in question because his actions and behaviour were contrary to his mandate. ECOWAS leadership had been informed of the situation several months prior and the individual in question was issued a warning by Malian authorities.

The Council will note that in its 27 October communiqué, the ECOWAS Commission recognizes that the recall of its representative had already begun in order to put a stop to his actions. Unfortunately, in the interim, the representative continued his destabilizing actions. I would like to underscore that these were individual, personal measures taken against the relevant person and that we will continue to pursue close cooperation with ECOWAS.

In conclusion, I would like to emphatically state that the Government and the people of Mali reiterate their appreciation and gratitude for the Security Council's tremendous contribution to ongoing stabilization efforts in my country and beyond, in the Sahel region.

I would also like to reiterate the gratitude of the Government and the people of Mali to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to all regional and international organizations and to all the troop-contributing countries for their sacrifices in order to reach a definitive and lasting solution to the Malian crisis.

I pay tribute to the memory of all the victims of this crisis — civilian and military, foreign and Malian — who have fallen on the field of battle in Mali.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.