

Intervention by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

UNOWAS briefing

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Mr President,

Allow me to start by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Chambas for his very thorough presentation. Mr Special Representative, Belgium commends your daily work in favour of prevention, reconciliation, lasting peace and the promotion of the Rule of Law in West Africa and the Sahel.

Security situation

The **unstable security situation continues to concern us**. In particular, I am referring to the intensification of intercommunity violence in several countries in the region, such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mali and other terrorist attacks which are on the rise. This deterioration has a direct impact on the humanitarian situation, causing suffering among hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

The **ongoing conflicts between animal breeders and farmers deserves special attention**, because these tensions are currently a major source of instability in the sub-region and even beyond. I would like to congratulate the UNOWAS for raising greater awareness of this subject; we now need to implement the various good practices identified, particularly in collaboration with the ECOWAS.

In Burkina Faso, the spread and proliferation of attacks against the population and the Burkina Faso State in the north, the east, and even the south of the country is particularly alarming. These attacks undermine development and threaten regional stability. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to adapt the United Nations' presence in Burkina Faso to support the country with the challenges it is facing.

In Nigeria, the persistence of violent attacks by Boko Haram is also a worrying phenomenon.

Throughout the region, **Belgium applauds the bravery and sacrifices of the defence and security forces in their fight against terrorists.** However, my country believes that it will be impossible to put an end to this conflict if **Human rights** are ignored; if this is the case, success will be temporary and will undermine reconciliation and a long-term solution to the crisis.

Furthermore, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report, the response to the challenges in West Africa must not be solely security based. A **holistic approach is needed** to deal with violent extremism. This approach must focus on good governance, the fight against impunity, and a sustainable and inclusive development.

Peace building

Mr President,

The efforts made by Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone deserve our support: **national reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction, and the reform of the security sector** are major challenges for these States, the democratic institutions of which are being reinforced. The political wish to

establish good governance, democracy and Human rights will be decisive for ensuring the permanence of what has been achieved and consistency in sustainable development.

Here, I would like to emphasise the important role played by the **Peacebuilding Commission** in supporting these countries by maintaining dialogue between all interested parties. Also, the activities carried out by the *Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)* continue to be vital for meeting specific needs: Belgium hails its approach focused on prevention. These efforts must focus on the new structure of Resident Coordinators with an integrated perspective, common to the three pillars of the UN (peace and security, development, human rights).

Climate-Security

Mr President,

The UNOWAS is a driving force in studying the impact of **climate change on security**, as part of "conflict prevention" approach. This is vital work and I encourage the Special Representative to continue this effort.

Regional organisations

To conclude, I also want to highlight the key role played by regional and sub-regional organisations. I welcome their close coordination with the UNOWAS and I encourage them to maintain this in the future.

Thank you.