

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

at the United Nations Security Council

UNOWAS briefing

New York, 10 January 2019

Mr President,

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

The unstable security situation continues to be of concern to us: in particular I am referring to the intensification of intercommunity violence in several countries in the region, such as Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali.

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. On this subject, we note the declaration of the state of emergency by President Kaboré on 31 December in the 14 provinces affected. These terrorist attacks undermine development and threaten regional stability.

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

Belgium hails the bravery and sacrifices of the security forces in their fight against the terrorists. At the same time, it will be impossible to put an end to this conflict if Human rights are ignored: if this is the case, the success of the security forces will be ephemeral and will undermine reconciliation and a long-term solution to the crisis.

Furthermore, as you pointed out in your report, the response to the challenges in West Africa must not only be security based. A holistic approach is required to deal with the violent extremism, which, in particular, places emphasis on good governance, dialogue and mediation, as well as on sustainable and inclusive development.

Finally, the multiplication of conflicts between animal breeders and farmers – a subject which Mr Chambas has already submitted to the Council in the past – deserves special attention, because these tensions are currently a major source of instability in the sub-region and even beyond. I wish to congratulate UNOWAS for having recently launched a study on the causes of these conflicts in the region. I encourage UNOWAS to ensure that its recommendations are implemented and thank it for putting this Council in charge of its monitoring.

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 with sustainable development.

Here, I wish to highlight the major role played by the Peacebuilding Commission in supporting these countries by maintaining a dialogue between all the 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 should be based on the new Resident Coordinators structure with a view to "One UN/Delivering as One".

Mr President,

UNOWAS also plays another pioneering role: although everyone agrees that climate change is one of the causes of conflict in the Sahel, UNOWAS implements the wish of this Council by studying the impact of climate change in the frame of a "conflict prevention" approach. This is vital work and I encourage the Special Representative to continue this effort.

To conclude, I also want to highlight the key role played by regional and sub-regional organisations. I encourage them to continue their close coordination with UNOWAS. History has shown us that the most convincing results are obtained by pooling strengths.

Thank you.