

**UNGA Debate pursuant to GA resolution 76/262 following the use of the veto by a permanent member during the 9408th meeting of the Security Council on 30 August 2023 on “The Situation in Mali”**

**11 September 2023**

**Statement by H.E. Yoka Brandt**

**Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**on behalf of the Benelux countries (Belgium — Luxembourg — the Netherlands)**

Mr. President,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the three Benelux countries: Belgium, Luxembourg, and my own country, the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Whilst aligning ourselves fully with the statement of the European Union, the Benelux countries would like to add the following three points.

First, on the importance of today’s debate.

The Benelux countries were proud cosponsors of resolution A/76/262, which was adopted by consensus on April 26<sup>th</sup> 2022; and which established a standing mandate for this General Assembly to hold a debate within 10 working days when a veto is cast in the Security Council. Resolution A/76/262 is there to remind everyone that the power of veto is not a privilege, but a responsibility.

Indeed, a permanent seat in the Council comes with the great responsibility to work tirelessly to achieve the purposes and principles of the Charter. As per Article 24.1 of the UN Charter, the Security Council acts on behalf of all Members States in carrying out its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today’s debate in particular is to remind Russia, that has cast yet another veto – its fifth veto out of all five vetoes casted since the adoption of resolution A/76/262 -, that it will have to face the full membership. It has to hear whether the Membership agrees that its use of the veto has, in fact, benefited peace and security.

Second, on the implications of the decision of Russia to veto this resolution.

The Benelux countries join others in expressing regret about use of the veto by Russia on the resolution proposed by the co-penholders France and the United Arab Emirates for a one-year extension of the United Nations Sanctions Regime and Panel of Experts for Mali. The draft resolution had received support from 13 Council members including all of the African Member States.

Russia's veto undermines the collective efforts to preserve peace and security in Mali and the wider region. Russia's veto is likely to have detrimental consequences for the Algiers Peace Process, thereby badly affecting the situation of the Malian population. With the departure of MINUSMA and now the lifting of sanctions, key incentives that underpinned the peace process have been removed.

This use of the veto undermines the principles of multilateralism that we have pledged to uphold at the UN, as it threatens peace and stability in Mali.

Third, on the collective commitment toward the people of Mali and the region

The Malian people will continue to be at the heart of our engagement in Mali. The Benelux countries reaffirm Malian sovereignty and its territorial integrity. In less than a year, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara has almost doubled its areas of control in Mali. We condemn the acts of terrorist groups.

We are extremely worried about the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation, and about human rights violations committed by all sides. Amongst others, we are deeply concerned by the increase in conflict-related sexual violence as well as the involvement of the Wagner Group and the Malian Armed Forces in these violations, as documented and reported on in the Panel of Experts report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August.

The Benelux countries are committed to the Peace Agreement and the plight of the Malian people. At the request of the Malian partners, as part of the national reconciliation efforts under the Peace Agreement, an International Commission of Inquiry for Mali was established by the UN Secretary-General on 19 January 2018 in accordance with article 46 of the Peace

Agreement. This Commission, which concluded its work in June 2020, was entirely funded by the Benelux countries.

Today, we reaffirm our support for the Peace Agreement and call on all parties to implement it. We also express our appreciation and support for the work of the Panel of Experts in Mali.

With the departure of MINUSMA, the termination of the sanctions as well as the termination of the work of the Panel of Experts, dialogue, mediation, and cooperation between Mali and the UN are more important than ever. This General Assembly can also play its vital role by exploring and taking concrete operational steps towards advancing peace and security in Mali and the region.

I thank you.