



Security Council Briefing on UNOWAS, 11 January 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President, and I also thank SRSG Leonardo Simão and Dr Thérroux-Bénoni for their insightful briefings today.

Malta welcomes the Secretary-General's report and expresses gratitude to SRSG Simão and UNOWAS for their efforts in promoting democratic processes and mitigating crises in an evolving region.

We welcome elections held in 2023 in Nigeria, Liberia, and Guinea Bissau. Notably, we recognise the increased representation of women in political and appointed positions in Sierra Leone, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire following their recent elections. Looking ahead to 2024, we anticipate elections in Senegal, Mauritania and Ghana and we call for free, fair and transparent electoral processes that allow all eligible citizens to participate as voters, candidates and observers.



For those countries under transitional government rule, we urge them to commit to realistic plans of transition and to return to constitutional order, without any delay.

Specifically, we reiterate our strong call for the immediate and unconditional release of President Mohamed Bazoum of Niger, and we support the way forward proposed at the 64th Ordinary Session of ECOWAS held last December, for restoration of constitutional order in the country.

On this note, we reaffirm our support to ECOWAS, under Nigeria's current chairmanship, as it continues to uphold accountability while offering technical advice and support to transitional processes.

President

The dire humanitarian situation, compounded by other drivers of conflict, such as political instability, violent extremism, and climate change, demands our urgent attention. The resulting large-scale displacement of populations in the region is extremely worrying.



We pay tribute to those humanitarian aid workers and journalists killed in the region as well as those who persevere despite relentless challenges, including due to a shrinking civic space.

We reiterate our call for strengthened protection of those in vulnerable situations, especially women and girls facing gender- and sexual-based violence, as well as children who face heightened risks of recruitment, severe acute malnutrition, lack of education due to school closures, and armed conflict.

As signatories of the Joint Pledges on Climate, Peace and Security, Malta recognises the pivotal role of risk assessments and preventive measures in addressing climate-adverse impacts in the region. We fully support this pillar in the work of UNOWAS and encourage further collaboration with relevant sub-regional fora.

President



Malta uses today's occasion to highlight the situation in Mali, particularly following the closure of MINUSMA at the request of the Malian Transitional Government. The international community must continue to play its part in supporting and safeguarding the wellbeing of the Malian people, as the country is seeing a surge of terrorist attacks and hostilities between the parties of the Peace Agreement.

We call on the Transitional Government to openly engage with the UN system, and to define a new role for UNOWAS and the UN Country Team in transferring the Mission's tasks.

To conclude, President, Malta believes in the power of transforming challenges into opportunities in West Africa and the Sahel – a region which holds great potential. It is for this reason that Malta supports increased reporting by the Secretary-General, supplemented by briefings to this Council, on the region's multi-dimensional challenges. Our collective goal to overcome these challenges should also lead Council Members to adopt the pending presidential statement under this item.



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I thank you.