



Security Council Briefing on UNOWAS, 12 July 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Ms. Francesca Cassar

Africa, Economic and Development Coordinator of Malta to the UN, New York

Thank you, President, and I also thank SRSG Simão for his remarks.

Malta commends UNOWAS for its efforts in West Africa and the Sahel. SRSG Simão's recent visits demonstrate the UN's support to the people in the region, including their quest for peace and stability.

In this vein, we strongly support the Security Council's unified call through the recently adopted Presidential Statement on UNOWAS, and we thank Switzerland and Sierra Leone for their tireless efforts.

On the political front, we welcome the strengthening of democratic governance in Senegal, Ghana, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire. Yet, we are concerned regarding the lack of progress in ensuring women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe representation in elected and appointed positions in Guinea, Senegal, Benin, and across the Central Sahel.

We fully support the call for effective implementation and resourcing of national action plans on Women, Peace and Security, and legislation that promotes gender equality.



We acknowledge the improved forecast of economic performance in the region, and we augur Côte d'Ivoire and Benin's success in their return to the international Eurobonds market.

Malta also welcomes the commitment displayed by ECOWAS to good governance and constitutional order. We call on Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to engage with ECOWAS and other regional organisations, in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

We are deeply concerned that terrorism, violent extremism, and unconstitutional changes of government, continue to undermine regional stability. We strongly condemn all offensives by terrorist groups in the region, including violations of international humanitarian law, and violations and abuses of human rights.

Civilians, particularly women and children, are bearing the brunt of these threats. The number of children recruited and used, and abducted has seen staggering numbers in the region. We call on all parties to increase efforts to protect children, and to adhere to their obligations under international law. We must do better.



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At last month's Arria-Formula Meeting on the nexus between terrorism and violent extremism, and security in the region, we recalled the importance of coordination among regional and sub-regional organisations, in particular to curb the worrying spread of terrorism to coastal States.

We are encouraged by the establishment of the Nigerian Counter-Terrorism Centre, as a regional hub for ECOWAS Member States.

Safeguarding the rights of vulnerable communities must remain at the forefront of our collective efforts. We are encouraged by the adopted recommendations from Gambian lawmakers to maintain the country's ban on female genital mutilation. We strongly urge the retention of this ban.

At the same time, we are concerned at threats to the fundamental rights and freedoms of LGBTQ+ people, namely in Ghana.



President

The adverse implications of climate change on the security of West Africa and the Sahel are undeniable. Devastating cycles of droughts, flooding and sea-level rise precipitate further humanitarian suffering. A staggering 33 million people in the Sahel currently require lifesaving humanitarian assistance and protection services.

An interlinked, multi-disciplinary and coordinated approach is therefore required to respond to these climate-security risks. We welcome the progress made by UNOWAS in implementing the 'Dakar Call to Action' and the work in strengthening partnerships through climate action initiatives.

To conclude, we remain committed to giving West Africa and the Sahel the attention it truly deserves. We reiterate our support for increased UNOWAS reporting to ensure that timely information is received by this Council to better address the region's needs.

I thank you.