

Adapting MINUSMA while working toward lasting peace in Mali

Merci beaucoup Monsieur President, thank you Minister le Drian and to the French Security Council Presidency for the opportunity to discuss the important issue of the situation in Mali. I am delighted that we have been joined by His Excellency Foreign Minister Dramé of Mali today. And let me also extend our thanks to their Excellencies, Secretary-General Guterres and African Union High Representative for the Sahel and Mali, Mr Buyoya, for reinforcing the importance of co-ordinated international response. We further welcome the commitment of the African Union to Mali and the region, including the commitment to deploy African Union forces. And let me assure all colleagues that the United Kingdom remains committed to working with all of you through the United Nations and through the new Sahel Coalition, as well as bilaterally to support progress in Mali.

As the Security Council meets this month to look at MINUSMA's progress and indeed to renew its mandate, we, like others, wish to join those recognising the immense sacrifices made by UN peacekeepers working for peace in Mali. In seven years, more than 200 personnel have lost their lives serving in MINUSMA. Now, the scourge of Covid-19 presents an added challenge to those who serve on the front line in this Mission. I wish to join with others and the Secretary-General in paying tribute to all our incredible peacekeepers who have lost their lives, including recently the two in Mali who tragically have died due to this global pandemic.

The work of peacekeepers saves lives. As we have heard today, MINUSMA continues to make an absolutely direct impact on the ground through its work to support the Malian Government and signatory parties in implementing the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement. The recent legislative elections, coupled with the partial deployment of the reconstituted army to the North and the inclusive national political dialogue – including, most importantly, women's participation – are indeed strong signs of progress.

I therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recent report. And as we move forward, we should continue to support MINUSMA and call on the Government of Mali to spare absolutely no effort in fully implementing all requirements of the peace agreement. In this as we reflect on the 20th anniversary year of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, it is absolutely incumbent on each and every one of us to be absolutely committed that women play a full, integrated, effective and meaningful role at every single stage of this important process.

To succeed, revised goals for the North, as set out in the mandate, must be both ambitious and indeed achievable. New benchmarks must help to restore state authority and tackle impunity in the Centre. Recent reports and allegations of human rights violations must rally MINUSMA to protect civilians and encourage accountability – a point well made by Minister Heiko Mass.

We will significantly increase our contribution this year through the deployment of 250 UK troops in a long-range mechanised infantry Reconnaissance Task Patrol Group. It is my hope, it is our belief that this three-year commitment will multiply our success; it will enhance the security and safety of all peacekeepers and embed peacekeeping reform.

Lastly, the United Kingdom commit to support improved mission performance through our bilateral support and training offer to Troop Contributing Countries.

Mr President, to conclude, though MINUSMA's mandate – yes it is complex and the scale of the challenge makes this the UN's most expensive peacekeeping operation – but we must recognise positively that we are making progress. As we review that progress and agree the way ahead together, we must remind ourselves that MINUSMA is not itself a permanent solution, but a route to a means to an end, to a more sustainable and long-standing solution.

The United Kingdom fully supports efforts to adapt and improve the Mission as we seek to bring lasting peace and stability to Mali. Therefore, despite the volatility in the environment that we have seen through the continued presence of armed groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, the UK will continue to support the Mission Adaptation Plan to deliver more agile, responsive and adaptable force to meet these challenges. The UK is proud to play our part. At a system-wide level, we will continue to fund implementation of the Peacekeeping Intelligence Policy, which supports the non-clandestine collection of intelligence. This informs a 'whole of mission' approach to planning, which improves both the safety of mission personnel and the protection of civilians. So let me assure all Member States that we will continue to fund the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System that informs decision makers as part of an integrated policy performance framework. And we remain committed, as with others, to play our part in Mali through the UN.

Thank you.