

Mali continues to make progress, but swift action needed as civilians still face threats – UN envoy

5 October 2017 – While recent crises threatening the peace process in Mali had been overcome and new agreements reached, progress must be accelerated as the situation remains perilous for peacekeepers and civilians, the head of United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the West African country told the Security Council today.

“Despite the positive developments, we must remember that the agreed deadlines of 2018 are quickly approaching and the challenges are enormous,” said Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Mali and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)) [said](#) via videoconference from the Malian capital, Bamako.

“All parties must redouble their efforts to re-establish trust between them and, despite the prolonged delays in the implementation of the Agreement [on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali], engage in necessary reforms and provide a peace dividend to the people,” he added.

He said that the period under the Council’s review, mid-June to mid-September, witnessed debate over a draft revision of the national Constitution amid armed clashes between the Platform and Coordination, the two coalitions that had signed onto the 2015 peace agreement. The combined efforts of the signatory movements and the international community had allowed MINUSMA to overcome the crises, but delays in implementing the agreement persisted.

Following the clashes, he said, truces were agreed upon in August, with further commitments to end hostilities having been signed in September. Earlier in the day, several prisoners held by the groups had been freed and recent progress included the participation in a 20 September high-level meeting in New York of both coalition leaders, who had agreed to accelerate the peace agreement’s implementation.

Some of the specifics they had discussed included establishing a second chamber of Parliament, operationalizing territorial collectives, launching demobilization activities, security sector reform and redeploying the reformed national military.

“Yet, the challenges remain enormous,” he stressed. The Human rights situation remains a source of deep concern, particularly given the rise of armed extremism, the absence of State authority in certain areas and the imposition of anti-terrorism measures. While progress in fighting impunity for abuses that occurred during the 2012 crisis included the conviction of Aliou Mahamane Touré, there must be justice for all and every perpetrator must held accountable, he said.

He added that the recently authorized sanctions regime was an important part of the pursuit of justice and peace. Initiatives such as the dissemination of information on human rights and the establishment of the international commission of inquiry would also help fight impunity, he said, adding that MINUSMA continued to support State institutions in all areas through regular dialogue.

The security situation remained a major obstacle, he said, with nearly daily losses of UN peacekeepers due to anti-personnel mines and improvised explosives. Accelerated reconciliation efforts were needed as was the full deployment of the escort battalion for the regional reaction force. Given all the challenges, he reiterated the need for funding to invest in protection, improve monitoring, enhanced patrolling and detection, and early warning systems to reduce the toll of attacks.

[UN report reveals shocking levels of grave violations against children affected by conflicts](#)

5 October 2017 – More than 15,500 children became victims of widespread violations – including shocking levels of killing and maiming, recruitment and use, and denial of humanitarian access – a new United Nations report has revealed.

According to the Secretary-General's [report on children and armed conflict](#), presented today to the Security Council, children from countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, suffered an unacceptable level of violations by parties to conflict – both government forces as well as non-State armed groups.

“The tragic fate of child victims of conflict cannot and must not leave us unmoved; a child killed, recruited as a soldier, injured in an attack or prevented from going school due to a conflict is already one too many,” the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, said in a [news release](#) today.

Of the 20 country situations included in the report, at least 4,000 verified violations committed by Government forces and over 11,500 by non-State armed groups. Afghanistan recorded the highest number of verified child casualties since the UN started documenting civilian casualties in 2009, with 3,512 children killed or maimed last year – an increase of 24 per cent compared to the previous year.

The report also documents 851 verified cases (more than double the number in

2015) of children recruited and used in Syria, and 1,915 in Somalia in 2016. It also notes that in Yemen, at least 1,340 children were killed or maimed. In Syria that number stood at 1,299.

UN chief 'appalled' at scale of violations

[Expressing shock](#) over the scale of violations documented in the report, UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres reiterated his call on parties to conflict to abide by their responsibility to protect children, in accordance with their obligation under international humanitarian and human rights law.

“The goal of the report is not only to raise awareness of the violations of the rights of children but also to promote measures that can diminish the tragic plight of children in conflict,” read a statement attributable to the spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

“The Secretary-General is encouraged that several governments and non-state actors are now working with the United Nations towards that objective. He hopes that more will follow,” it added.

The statement further noted that the new *Developments and Concerns* section included in the report reflects this enhanced UN engagement, which should lead to reducing the suffering of children victims of armed conflict and increase their protection.

The violations covered in the report include recruitment or use of children; killing or maiming children; committing rape and other forms of sexual violence against children; engaging in attacks on schools and/or hospitals; and abducting children in situations of armed conflict.

The parties which committed these violations are listed in annexes to the report. The annexes also include parties that have put in place measures to improve protection of children during the reporting period and those who have not implemented adequate measures.

[Security Council expands mandate of UN Mission to verify truce between Colombian Government and ELN](#)

5 October 2017 – Acting unanimously, the United Nations Security Council today expanded the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, tasking it to monitor temporary bilateral ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) armed group.

The Council, through a news resolution, decided that the [UN Verification](#)

[Mission](#) will, on a temporary basis until 9 January 2018, “verify compliance with the temporary, bilateral, national ceasefire with the ELN at the national, regional and local level.”

“[It shall also] endeavour to prevent incidents through enhanced coordination between the parties and resolution of disagreements” noted the resolution.

In today’s resolution, the Security Council also tasked the Verification Mission with enabling a timely response by the parties to incidents, as well as verifying and reporting publicly and to the parties on compliance with the ceasefire.

The Council also approved an addition of no more than 70 international observers, as [requested](#) by the Secretary-General for liaising with the Colombian Armed Forces and ELN to avoid conflicting movements and prevent armed clashes.

The resolution follows an agreement reached in early September in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, between the Colombian Government and the ELN on a bilateral and temporary ceasefire. The ceasefire entered into force on 1 October, and is due to remain in force until the second week of January 2018.

Also today, the Council adopted a presidential statement in which it recognized the work of the (now closed) UN Mission in Colombia and welcomed the “remarkable achievements” in the country following the 2016 Final Agreement between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP).

[Vegetable oils lift food prices in September; cereal prices down on bumper crop prospects](#)

5 October 2017 – Global food prices rose slightly in September, as firmer prices of vegetable oils and dairy products offset declining prices for staple cereal grains, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) said today.

A [news release](#) said that the FAO Food Price Index – tracking the monthly change in international market prices for five key commodity groups – averaged 178.4 points for the month of September, up 0.8 per cent from August and marking a 4.3 per cent increase from a year earlier.

Vegetable oil prices increased by 4.6 per cent, driven primarily by palm oil, although values for soy, rapeseed and sunflower oils also rose.

Dairy prices rose by 2.1 per cent from August, driven by butter and cheese prices at a time of supply constraints in Australia, New Zealand and the European Union. Meat prices were broadly unchanged.

Cereal prices declined by 1.0 per cent, as maize and wheat quotations fell in step with strong supply and harvest prospects. FAO expects the current growing season to yield record worldwide cereals output.

Sugar prices was unchanged for the month, but it was about 33 per cent below its year-ago level – a decline due to oversupply in world markets and a slowdown in demand.

Cereal inventories head for a new high

FAO updated its global cereal production forecast for 2017, raised to 2,612 million tonnes, or almost 7 million tonnes above the record set in 2016, according to the Cereal Supply and Demand Brief, also released today.

September's forecasts were raised on account of robust wheat production trends in Europe and Russia and expected maize outputs in China and the United States.

FAO now forecasts 750.1 million tonnes of wheat to be harvested in 2017 and 1,361 million tonnes of coarse grains, as well as 500.7 million tonnes of rice.

[Security Council re-authorizes operations to disrupt migrant smuggling off coast of Libya](#)

5 October 2017 – The Security Council today extended by one year the authorization for Member States to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking.

Unanimously adopting a resolution, the 15-member body condemned all acts of migrant smuggling and human trafficking into, through and from the Libyan territory and off the coast of Libya, which further undermine the process of stabilization of Libya and endanger the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

The Council underscored that the resolution is intended to disrupt the organized criminal enterprises, but not to undermine the human rights of individuals or prevent them from seeking protection under international human rights law and international refugee law.

The Council reiterated its calls on Member States, acting nationally or through regional organizations, to cooperate with the Government of National Accord and with each other to assist Libya, upon request, in building needed capacity to secure its borders and prevent, investigate and prosecute acts of smuggling of migrants and human trafficking through its territory and in its territorial sea.