

Mali's actions and statements call into question its commitment to partnership with the UN

Thank you, President, and thank you, SRSW Wane, for your insights, your leadership of MINUSMA and the hard work of your team in the toughest of circumstances. I join others in expressing our deepest condolences following the deaths of the four Chadian peacekeepers in Kidal. I also welcome the participation of Foreign Minister Diop in our meeting and express condolences for the deaths of civilians and military losses on the Malian side.

Mr. President, when the Council met to discuss Mali in June, we encouraged the transitional authorities to continue engaging with ECOWAS on an election timetable. Since then, agreement has been reached, sanctions lifted and some positive steps made toward elections. The peace agreement monitoring committee has also met for the first time in over a year. As these endeavours move forward, we hope the authorities will ensure inclusive processes, particularly of women and young people, while promoting dialogue.

We understand the Malian authorities are dealing with multiple challenges. AQ and IS-affiliated groups continue to expand their territory, preying on communities and attacking military bases. The 40% increase in cases of conflict-related sexual violence reported by the Secretary-General is a shocking illustration of just how urgent it is to improve human rights protection.

But the terror imposed by these groups must not be countered with a military response that itself fails to protect civilians and their human rights. In August, the UN Independent Expert on human rights in Mali reported violations committed by Malian forces alongside – and I quote – ‘foreign military personnel described as Russian military officials’. The malign presence of the Wagner Group can no longer be ignored or denied.

All perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations must be held accountable. Without accountability and justice, trust cannot be rebuilt and grievances will endure. MINUSMA must be granted unrestricted access to investigate human rights allegations independently. Mali's statement in June that the authorities would not guarantee the mission's freedom to achieve this was deeply concerning and it is part of a pattern of actions and statements that call into question Mali's commitment to full partnership with MINUSMA. We urge the authorities to work constructively with the mission, lifting restrictions and facilitating the vital work of peacekeepers.

The United Kingdom remains a strong supporter of MINUSMA and its mission. The UN's forthcoming review of MINUSMA will need to answer some fundamental questions. These include whether and how the mission can maintain a viable presence in Mali. The review should present credible options reflecting realities on the ground. We look forward to engaging with colleagues on this

in the coming weeks.