



## SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERT GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

### Summary of the meeting on the situation in Mali, held on March 28<sup>th</sup> 2023

On 28 March 2023, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security (IEG) convened a meeting on the situation in Mali. The members were briefed by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Ms. Daniela Krosiak, accompanied by representatives from the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the UN Country Team. The meeting concluded with an overview of key recommendations provided by UN Women and additional observations provided by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

#### **Questions from Council Members:**

Security Council members asked for the implications that the different scenarios laid out in the recent strategic review of MINUSMA would have on women and girls, and how to avoid the worst outcome for them; suggestions to strengthen the language on women, peace and security in the next resolution on Mali, and especially on women's participation in specific processes; and stronger cooperation between the mission and the panel of experts monitoring the sanctions regime to facilitate the listing of alleged perpetrators; Council Members raised the need to ensure the protection of women and girls beyond the conflict-affected areas in the north and the centre, as well as the need for more data on the situation of women and girls in the areas controlled by terrorist groups. They asked for the UN's plans to address the fact that the new draft constitution has no explicit references to gender parity, gender-based violence, or the promotion of women's rights, efforts to prevent both online and offline violence against women candidates ahead of elections and the participation of women and girls in the prevention and response to climate-related shocks, and how the mission is following-up on reprisals against women peacebuilders, including Ms. Aminata Dicko, who briefed the Security Council in January 2023. Other questions revolved around the impact on women and girls of the impasse in the peace process, the extent of hate speech aimed at women in public life, and the results of the investigation on alleged grave violations of human rights in Moura, central Mali, in March 2022. One Council Member requested that all UN reports mention the Wagner Group by name rather than referring broadly to "foreign security personnel."

#### **Main points raised in the meeting:**

- Since the last time the IEG met in April 2021, the Security Council has adopted four resolutions, all including provisions on women, peace and security, and was briefed by six Malian women from civil society. The most recent one, Ms. Aminata Dicko, was subjected to threats and harassment after her briefing, and the Security Council met in February 2023 to discuss these worrisome developments.

- As laid out by the transitional authorities, several key electoral deadlines in 2023 will pave the way to the return to constitutional order, culminating in the organization of presidential elections scheduled for February 2024. Despite some delays, including the recent postponement of the constitutional referendum, the transitional authorities have reiterated that they remain committed to maintaining this electoral calendar.
- The transitional authorities have made some inroads into placing gender parity and inclusivity into the political agenda of the transition. Several decision-making bodies are now close to reaching the legislative gender quota of 30 percent, as required by law since December 2015. For example, women make up 28.6 percent of the members of the Transitional Assembly (compared to 9.5 percent in 2013). Women also make up 20.7 percent of ministers and delegated ministers. Additionally, 4 women were appointed by decree to the 15-member Independent Electoral Management Authority, making up over a quarter of its members. 38 percent of the Peace Agreement Monitoring Committee (CSA) and its four sub-committees are women. The transitional Government has also endorsed and kick-started the socio-economic integration of 900 women from the signatory movements, a process led by the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and financed by the World Bank.
- Despite these advances, women remain heavily under-represented, especially in regional and local government. For example, only 4.6 percent of the prefects appointed in July 2022 and in February 2023 are women. There is only one woman currently serving as governor, the governor of Sikasso, being only the fourth woman governor appointed since the independence of Mali. Women make up only 11 percent of all Ambassadors.
- On 27 January, the president appointed a commission to finalize the draft constitution. Only 20 percent of its members were women and women were not appointed to some of the key positions on this position. The UN has supported civil society in analysing the draft text and informing communities about it, while a date for the referendum has not yet been agreed after its recent postponement.
- Women's participation in the economy also remains limited with women lacking access, control and ownership of land and financial assets.
- As for the security sector, women also remain largely absent. For example, women are only 0.6 percent of members of the Operational Coordination Mechanism set up by the peace accord and consisting of mixed units from the national army and the signatory movements.
- Efforts are being undertaken by the transitional authorities to support women's entry into public life, their representation within state institutions and participation in the economic sector. In this respect, the transitional authorities continue to solicit the support of the United Nations and other key international partners, including for capacity-building initiatives led by the government.
- Recently, for example, MINUSMA, together with UN Women and UNDP, supported the organization of a high-level inclusive seminar, co-led by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, in charge of the electoral process, and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family. This exercise culminated in the validation of the content of a roadmap for gender integration in the electoral process and upcoming political and administrative reforms. MINUSMA is also fostering the efforts of women from political parties and civil society by supporting initiatives to reinforce their leadership skills and capacities, and analyze and disseminate the draft Constitution.

- The UN is also supporting the building of dormitories for women officers in the police and gendarmerie deployed in Gao, Tombouctou, and Mopti, to facilitate women's increased representation in the security sector.
- The UN and bilateral partners are providing technical and financial support for the implementation of third National Action Plan on WPS (2019-2023). As part of localization efforts, the plan has been adopted in nine regions out of 20 (19 regions plus Bamako district), and UN Women's assessment indicates that those regions register greater acceptance of women as peace and security actors in their communities, including their mediation efforts at the local level and community-based conflict prevention (women's peace huts, peace circles, peace observatories, and others). The main challenge for greater implementation remains financial resources.
- Compared to 2021, 2022 saw a 49 percent increase of reported cases of gender-based violence. 55 percent of these cases were sexual violence. In addition to conflict-related sexual violence, targeted violence against women, and harmful social practices, abductions of girls by armed groups continue to be reported, including the kidnapping of 21 girls in Ségou as recently as January of this year. The UN requested greater support to scale up initiatives that are already working -such as the establishment of 17 one-stop-centers for GBV survivors, the deployment of mobile units to support IDPs and host communities, and the interventions funded by the Spotlight Initiative- and strengthen data collection efforts at local levels, given the lack of access to conflict-affected areas.
- Access to multisectoral services remains severely limited, especially in remote areas as one-stop centers are mainly established in regional capitals, compelling survivors living outside of these urban centers to traverse vast distances. In 2022, 92 per cent of survivors were unable to access safe shelters, while 42 per cent were unable to obtain medical support. Security incidents, including vandalism, affected 65 per cent of service provision facilities in Gao and Ménaka.
- Despite widespread insecurity, which hampered access, monitoring and reporting, the United Nations verified 98 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 85 women and 13 girls. The perpetrators were members of armed groups, including *Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA), *Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad Dawsahak* (MSA-D), *Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et alliés* (GATIA), and the *Coordination des mouvements et front patriotique de résistance* (CMFPR), as well as members of militia and self-defence groups, such as *Dan Na Ambassagou* and *Ganda-Izo*. Of concern is the increased use of sexual violence by militias and self-defence groups which often go unreported because of their proximity to local communities and the attendant fear of reprisals. In some cases, the perpetrators were armed elements who could not be identified. Members of the Malian Defence and Security Forces (MDSF) and foreign security personnel were also implicated in cases sexual violence against civilians.
- The United Nations continued to support the transitional authorities in the implementation of the action plan related to the 2019 joint communiqué to address conflict-related sexual violence, as well as unilateral commitments by non-state actors to tackle sexual violence, in particular the CMA. MINUSMA's sustained engagement with the High Islamic Council of Mali culminated in the signing of a fatwa in January 2023 which urged the prohibition of CRSV, underscored the need to hold perpetrators accountable, and encouraged support from communities to survivors and children born of rape. The United Nations continues to support national judicial authorities to advance in the proceedings of the four emblematic

cases of conflict-related sexual violence which involve 145 victims and have been pending before the courts for over a decade.

- The transitional government adopted a decree in November 2022 establishing the compensation modalities for damages resulting from serious human rights violations, including financial support to cover medical costs for treatments, as well as rehabilitation for both survivors and their children, including children born of conflict-related rape.
- In the discussion, the group was also informed that another Malian woman from civil society had recently been arrested due to public statements she made on social media.
- In January 2023, the Secretary-General presented the Strategic Review Report, containing three main options and several sub-options for the reconfiguration of MINUSMA's mandate and presence. In light of the challenging situation regarding women and their rights, the UN insisted that it is important that the prioritization of WPS remains at the core of any reconfiguration of the mandate of MINUSMA, and that a reduced presence of MINUSMA would have a negative impact on the situation for women, their protection and ability to participate fully in the peace process, and will risk an expansion of extremist armed groups and a deteriorating security situation, with increased violations of women's rights, including sexual and gender-based violence as a result.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations were made by UN Women, as the secretariat of the IEG.<sup>1</sup>

In the negotiations on the mandate renewal for MINUSMA, the Security Council should continue to prioritize Women, Peace and Security and retain the references to women, peace and security in resolution 2640 (2022), including in any reconfiguration of the mandate, and consider the following additions:

- Urge Malian transitional authorities to respect a strict application of the law no. 052 of 18th December 2015, with the 30 percent quota for women in elected and appointed positions, regretting that women are still significantly under-represented in national, local and regional government, and urging their meaningful participation in the transition and restoration of civilian rule, as well as any engagement with signatory or non-signatory armed groups, in line with the recommendations of the 2020 National Dialogue.
- Urge and support the Mali transitional authorities to create a conducive environment for women's rights, their protection and promotion, that prevents and addresses violence, including GBV, against women peacebuilders, human right defenders and women's organizations engaged in the political transition, electoral process, and the peace process, including through legal frameworks, and request the Mission to monitor and report on these matters.
- Call on the Malian transitional authorities to facilitate the participation of internally displaced persons and returnees, including women, in the upcoming elections and the constitutional referendum.

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<sup>1</sup> These recommendations are suggestions from UN participants in this meeting or the background note prepared by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, including by the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict. They are not recommendations from the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council Members.

- Urge the transitional authorities to redouble efforts to achieve the effective implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- Urge the transitional authorities to ensure the participation of women, including from civil society and in forced displacement within the country, in decision-making processes related to national security and counterterrorism policies and military expenditures.
- Urge the transitional authorities to adopt and implement a law on gender-based violence, establish mechanism to facilitate the protection of GBV victims, and reinforce victims' access to justice, and request the support from UN and international partners to this end.
- Urge the transitional authorities to prioritize the cases of conflict-related sexual violence pending before the courts for a decade now, to investigate gross violations or abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law, including by national armed forces, armed and militia groups and foreign security personnel, and to ensure that the law on reparations is effectively implemented and addresses the needs of survivors, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and those who have testified before the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission.
- Ensure the recruitment of an adequate number of Gender Advisers and Women's Protection Advisers to reach conflict-affected areas of Mali and operate in proximity to communities at risk.
- Call the transitional authorities to accelerate the implementation of the joint communiqué to address conflict-related sexual violence and the three-year joint Action Plan adopted by the Government of Mali and MINUSMA to prevent and respond to CRSV.
- Request the UN and international partners to contribute to preventing and responding to harmful practices affecting women and girls and develop innovative solutions to address these in areas where the presence of the State is limited.
- Request the United Nations and international partners to conduct gender-sensitive risk-assessments on the adverse effects of climate change and to ensure women's meaningful participation and leadership in efforts to address the impact of climate-related shocks on peace and security in Mali, including through conflict-sensitive natural resource management.
- Request the United Nations and international partners to support programmes aimed at enhancing women's participation, protection and empowerment that will contribute to stabilization in the Centre and the North of the country.

In addition, members of the Security Council could request more detailed information from the United Nations on the women's rights situation in areas controlled by armed groups in central and northern Mali, and the potential impact of each of the options laid out in the strategic review for MINUSMA (SG Report 2023/26 of 16 January 2023), as well as the withdrawal of several troop contributing countries.

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and committed to follow-up on the important issues raised at the meeting.