

The President of the Security Council presents his compliments to the members of the Council and has the honour to transmit herewith, for their information, a copy of a **letter dated 12 May 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations** addressed to the Secretary-General, and its enclosure.

This letter and its enclosure will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2021/464.

13 May 2021



New York, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Excellency,

Ireland and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, would like to share the summary note of the following meeting of the Informal Expert Group:

- The situation in Mali

We would be grateful if the present letter and its attachment could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Handwritten signature of Geraldine Byrne Nason in black ink.

Geraldine Byrne Nason  
Permanent Representative  
of Ireland  
to the United Nations

Handwritten signature of Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez in black ink.

Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez  
Permanent Representative  
of Mexico  
to the United Nations

Handwritten signature of Barbara Woodward in black ink.

Barbara Woodward  
Permanent Representative  
of the United Kingdom  
to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
New York





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

### Summary of the meeting on Mali held on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021

On 29 April 2021, 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 Joanne Adamson, accompanied by colleagues from the United Nations 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 shared by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

#### Questions from Council Members:

Members of the Security Council asked questions about the **decrease of women's representation** in public offices, the UN Country Team's collaboration with the African Union to support women civil society leaders in the **political transition**, the status of the **women's observatories**, the role of women in resolving **intercommunal conflicts**, MINUSMA's support for women's participation in the upcoming **elections**, and the involvement of women in **constitutional and electoral reforms, climate action**, and the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Other questions focused on lessons learned from the previous **National Action Plan** on Women, Peace and Security, the incorporation of a gender perspective in the **disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, women's economic empowerment**, and reasons for the increase of **conflict-related sexual violence** and recommendations on how to address impunity for these violations. Finally, Council Members also asked about the **G5 Sahel Joint Force** and the use of gender analysis in its operations.

#### Main points raised in the meeting:

- Since December 2016, more than sixty **women from civil society** have briefed the Council in country-specific meetings, but only one of them was from Mali.
- Following the 18 August 2020 **military coup**, women played a key role in mediating between the parties. A high-level consultation was organized together with the African Union and the African Women Leaders Network, the UN Deputy Secretary-General UN Women's Executive Director, and other UN entities, to listen to the priorities of women in the transition. As a result, the UN Country Team, in partnership with the **African Union**, developed a joint programme to support women civil society organizations during the political transition, including with capacity-building activities on specific reform issues.
- **The participation of women in the Agreement Monitoring Committee increased to 31 percent** in the past year, meeting the 30 percent quota for women's representation that was recommended at the January 2020 high-level workshop on the inclusion of women in the implementation of the peace agreement. There are now nine women among the Committee's 29 members, with the delegations of the government, the *Plateforme* coalition, and the

*Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad* each including three women. At the fifth high-level meeting of the Committee, held on 11 February 2021 in Kidal, participants agreed to increase the number of women from 9 to 12, and to **include another 12 women in its four subcommittees**. UN Women, MINUSMA and the Folke Bernadotte Academy are jointly providing support to the newly appointed women, in cooperation with the Malian government and with Norway's financial backing.

- The **Strategic Orientation Committee**, a new consultative body launched in April 2021 by the Prime Minister to address concerns about inclusiveness and bring together civil society, academia, political parties, and other actors, **only has 10 women among its 50 members**.
- With the appointment of the new **transitional government**, **women's participation decreased from 23 to 16 percent**, failing to meet the 30 percent quota prescribed by Malian law 052/2015. At the level of regional **governors**, there is only one woman among 20 governors (5 percent). At the level of **interim authorities**, after the latest appointments in April 2021, there are 43 women among 220 members (19.5 percent) for the Menaka region and 67 women among 236 members (28.4 percent) in the Taoudenit region. The increased militarization of the political space and the fragility of the transition tends to further limit women's participation.
- In the **elections** held in March and April 2020, women's representation in parliament increased to 27 percent, compared with 8 percent in the previous legislative elections. Support from the international community for women in political parties contributed to this positive outcome. MINUSMA, in partnership with UNDP, will provide logistical advice and support during the upcoming electoral process.
- Under the leadership of the Ministry of Women and with support from MINUSMA, UN Women, other UN entities, and the international community, the government adopted **Mali's third national action plan** on women, peace and security which covers the period of 2019 to 2023 and was signed by the Prime Minister on 12 November 2020.
- The UN reported an **increase of conflict-related sexual violence in 2020**, mainly driven by increased insecurity and presence of terrorist groups in the central region. MINUSMA recorded 29 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2020, affecting 21 women and 8 girls including rape, gang rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery, and 68 cases of children conceived as the result of rape. In the first quarter of 2021, MINUSMA has recorded two cases of conflict-related sexual violence. Underreporting is believed to be very high due to prevailing insecurity, fear of reprisals, lack of protection for victims and witnesses, stigma, lack of adequate holistic services for survivors, and mistrust in the judicial system, Information from service providers indicate a far higher case load with 27,000 cases of sexual and gender-based violence recorded since 2012. One-stop centres in Mopti and other locations function as a way for women and girls to receive medical and psychosocial support, legal advice, and follow-up economic support.
- Progress in the investigation and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence has been extremely limited due to capacity constraints and lack of political will. Despite concerted advocacy by MINUSMA and civil society organizations, **115 cases of conflict-related sexual violence**, perpetrated during the Islamist occupation and Tuareg rebellion in the north, are **still pending** before the tribunal of commune III in Bamako.
- In 2019, MINUSMA, in collaboration with the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, undertook an **assessment of the judicial response** to sexual violence incidents during 2012 and 2013 in Timbuktu, Gao and Bamako. It is expected that

in May 2021, the Malian counterparts will discuss and endorse the recommendations of that assessment.

- The **Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict is expected to undertake a virtual visit to Mali** at the end of May in cooperation with the International Criminal Court to focus on positive complementarity and the role of national judicial institutions. The last time the Special Representative briefed the Sanctions Committee on Mali was in April 2019 and some of the proposals made at that meeting, including to reflect sexual violence in the listing of a sharia court judge, are pending.
- **Over 50 percent of girls have been married before the age of 18.** While the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 for boys, it is 16 for girls and even 15 years with civil court authorization. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family, in collaboration with other governmental departments and civil society, has been working on a **draft law on gender-based violence since 2017**, but the consultation process was suspended after objections from the High Islamic Council. On a positive note, the current draft of the penal code now covers conflict-related sexual violence.
- In December 2020, women's rights groups sued the Malian government at the ECOWAS Court of Justice for failing to criminalize **female genital mutilation**.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** has led to an increase of the risk for women and girls to be subjected to sexual and gender-based violence and child marriage, as well as to economic losses due to precarious employment and limited access to social services.
- MINUSMA has not undertaken a gender analysis of the operations of the **G5 Sahel Joint Force**, but the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General expressed her intention to engage further in this regard.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations were made either by UN Women, as the secretariat of the IEG, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Acting Head of MINUSMA, or the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.<sup>1</sup>

- a) In the upcoming negotiations on the mandate of MINUSMA, the Security Council should retain all existing references to women, peace and security in both the preamble and operational paragraphs of resolution 2531 (2020). In the past year, the specificity and urgency of the calls by the Security Council in OP 3 of resolution 2531 helped actors on the ground make gains on women's participation.
- b) In addition, in a new mandate of MINUSMA the Security Council should consider including the following elements:
  - Reiterate the gender-responsive benchmarks laid out in the transition roadmap by the Secretary-General and consider including a benchmark related to addressing impunity for sexual violence.
  - Welcome the increased representation of women in the Peace Agreement Monitoring Committee and request the Malian parties to increase the representation of women in its subcommittees and other implementation mechanisms of the peace agreement as an urgent priority, including as co-chairs; support the

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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, and not recommendations from the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council Members.

operationalization of a women-led observatory; and strengthen the participation of women in all political processes during the transition and throughout electoral processes, as both voters and candidates.

- Urge the transitional authorities to ensure the adoption of political and institutional reforms that will advance gender equality, in consultation with women's civil society organizations, welcome efforts aimed at reviewing the Constitution ahead of a referendum in October 2021, and urge the Malian authorities to strengthen constitutional protection of women's rights in the process, as well as in the outcome document.
  - Encourage Malian authorities to adopt legislation on sexual and gender-based violence in compliance with international and regional conventions, establish specialized prosecutors and police and gendarmerie units dedicated to sexual and gender-based violence.
  - Encourage all parties to address the disproportionate negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in all strategies and programmes, including post-COVID 19 recovery plans.
- c) The co-chairs and other Council members should engage in strategic high-level political diplomacy and advocacy in support of women's representation in the government, all transitional institutions, and in the preparations for the elections scheduled for 2022.
- d) The Security Council should invite women from civil society to brief in upcoming meetings on Mali.
- e) When renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the sanctions committee later this year, the Security Council should call for the inclusion of the necessary gender expertise, in line with paragraph 6 of resolution 2242 and paragraph 11 of resolution 2467, and urge the Panel to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue across its investigations and reporting. The Council should also consider inviting the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to a meeting of the Sanctions Committee to brief on her virtual visit to Mali.
- f) In the context of the visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to Mali, Security Council members should advocate with the Malian authorities for accountability for sexual violence, including for the need of a prosecutorial strategy, and consider providing financial support for the establishment of support services for survivors of sexual violence, including one-stop centers.
- g) When negotiating a potential resolution on UN support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the Security Council should reiterate the provisions on women, peace and security in resolution 2391 (2017). If a new support office for the G5 Joint Force is created, the Security Council should request the new office to integrate a gender perspective throughout the delivery of its mandate and ensure gender balance in its staffing, in line with the United Nations Gender Parity Strategy.

The Co-Chairs thanked the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and all participants and committed to follow-up on the important issues raised at the meeting.