CONCLUSIONS
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1. The Support and Follow-up Group (SFG) on the situation in Mali held its 6th meeting in Bamako, on 2 November 2013. The opening ceremony was marked by statements delivered by the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, the United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, and the Minister of Justice acting on behalf of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Mohamed Ali Bathily.

2. The meeting, which was co-chaired by the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, Pierre Buyoya, Mr. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo and Mr. Hervé Ladsous, was attended by Mali, whose delegation was led by Mr. Zahabi Ould Sidi Mohamed, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and included Mr Cheick Oumar Diarrah, Minister of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Development for northern Mali, Mr. Soumeylou Boubèye Maiga, Minister of Defence and Former Combatants, and Mr Moussa Sinko Coulibaly, Minister of Territorial Administration, Mr Sada Samake, Minister of Security, and Mr Hamadoun Konaté, Minister of Labour and Social and Humanitarian Affairs. Ministers and other senior officials of the region and other AU Member States, as well as bilateral and multilateral partners also participated in the meeting. Furthermore, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Albert Gerard Koenders, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and Head of the UN Office in West Africa (UNOWA), Saïd Djinnit, and the European Union (EU) Special Representative for the Sahel, Michel Reveyrand De Menthon, also attended the meeting. The list of countries and organisations that participated in the meeting is indicated below.

3. The meeting afforded the Group the opportunity to review the developments in Mali since the last meeting of the SFG, held in Bamako, on 1 July 2013, and to exchange views with the Malian authorities on how best to consolidate the progress made in addressing the challenges facing the country. The meeting also discussed the overall security, humanitarian and development situation in the Sahel region, in light of the latest initiatives taken by the concerned stakeholders.

4. Participants welcomed the significant progress made over the past few months in stabilizing the situation in Mali. They hailed the peaceful and successful presidential election, whose first round and runoff took place on 28 July and 11 August 2013, respectively. They congratulated the new President of Mali, Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, on his election, and expressed appreciation to Mr. Soumaila Cissé, for having gracefully accepted the results of the elections. They commended former President Dioncounda Traoré for having successfully steered Mali’s transitional process and the restoration of constitutional order. Participants pledged to work with the new Government and continue to support Mali, in order to consolidate the gains made so far and enable the country to tackle the multifaceted challenges facing it.
5. Participants were informed of the decision of the Malian authorities to organise the legislative elections on 24 November 2013, with the second round slated for 15 December 2013, as well as of the steps being taken to this end. They encouraged the Government and all Malian stakeholders in their efforts to create conditions conducive to inclusive, transparent and credible legislative elections. They further encouraged them to hold appropriate and regular consultations among all stakeholders. They urged the international community to provide the required assistance, including in the area of security, financial resources, technical expertise, logistics and election observation.

6. Participants reiterated the importance of the full implementation of the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement of 18 June 2013, to ensure the effective restoration of State authority over the northern part of the country. They called for renewed efforts to overcome the challenges impeding the implementation of the Agreement, including the quartering of the elements of the armed groups signatory to the Ouagadougou Agreement, to pave the way for further steps, notably disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion of all concerned. They welcomed the confidence building measures taken by the Government, including the release of prisoners as stipulated in the Ouagadougou Agreement. They stressed the importance of the speedy implementation of the inclusive dialogue and reconciliation process. In this regard, they noted with satisfaction the launching of the "Assises nationales sur le nord du Mali", with large participation of local authorities and other stakeholders. They urged the Malian authorities to expedite the reconciliation process, with the support of international partners, as foreseen in the relevant decisions of Ecowas, the AU Peace and Security Council and UN Security Council resolution 2100 (2013).

7. More specifically, Participants expressed deep concern at the prevailing situation in Kidal, where State authority is not yet fully restored, noting that such situation provides terrorist groups with opportunities to carry out their criminal acts. They demanded that the armed groups, notably the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), unconditionally and immediately vacate the governorate and radio station in Kidal and to demonstrate consistency and seriousness in their commitment to the Agreement.

8. Participants expressed profound consternation following the announcement of the death of two French journalists, who were kidnapped today, 2 November 2013, in Kidal. They strongly condemned this cowardly act, and extended their condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the French Government and people.

9. Participants reiterated their call to the Malian authorities to expedite the effective redeployment of State administration to the northern regions of the country, as well as the rehabilitation and reestablishment of basic services, especially schools and health centres. They stressed that such steps are crucial to create an environment conducive to a return to normalcy, including the free and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees. In this regard, they
welcomed the national forum on decentralisation in Mali (États Généraux de la Décentralisation), held in Bamako, from 21 to 23 October 2013, which brought together central and local government authorities, representatives of the populations and refugee camps, as well as experts and international partners, to discuss decentralisation, including the devolution of power and the provision of resources and capacity-building to local government structures. They look forward to the effective implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of this forum, and encouraged the Malian authorities to draw lessons from past experiences and to maintain the inclusive nature of the process.

10. Participants condemned the recent terrorist attacks in Timbuktu, Gao and Tessalit against the personnel of MINUSMA, the Malian Defence and Security Forces (MDSF) and civilians, as well as against infrastructure. They expressed concern at the prevailing volatile security situation in northern Mali. They expressed support to on-going military operations by the MDSF and Serval Operation to deal with the threat that terrorist and criminal groups continue to pose to State institutions and human security.

11. Participants welcomed the efforts being deployed by the Government of Mali to rebuild its security and defense sector, through training, provision of adequate equipment, enhanced governance and appropriate civilian control and oversight. They reiterated their appreciation to the EU for the support rendered through its Training Mission, as well as to the other partners for their support. They called on Mali’s partners to increase their assistance to the ongoing efforts to reform the defense and security sector.

12. Participants welcomed the progress made, since 1 July 2013, in the deployment of MINUSMA, as authorized by resolution 2100 (2013). They called on the international community as a whole to extend the necessary support to MINUSMA, including mobilization of additional assets and enablers, in order to facilitate the early completion of the deployment of the Mission, bearing in mind the continued fragility of the situation in northern Mali. They stressed the need for continued close collaboration between all actors on the ground to address the security threats posed by terrorist groups in northern Mali, particularly as Serval gradually reduces its strength.

13. Participants expressed concern at the prevailing humanitarian situation in Mali, with almost half a million people displaced and at least 1.4 million in need of immediate food assistance. They reiterated the urgent need for continued and increased assistance to the affected populations, particularly women and children, and called on international partners to urgently address the gap in the funding of the Consolidated Appeal for Mali, noting that only 47% of the amount required has so far been mobilised. They took note of the efforts of the Malian Government aimed at preparing and supporting the return of the refugees and displaced persons. They encouraged the Government, with the support of MINUSMA and other partners, to continue working towards the creation of conditions conducive to their safe and voluntary return.
14. Participants reiterated the crucial importance of long-term socio-economic development in order to stabilize Mali. In this respect, they welcomed the adoption by the Government of Mali of the Plan for the Sustainable Revival of Mali for the period 2013-2014 (Plan pour la relance durable du Mali 2013-2014 - PRED), the Emergency Programme for the Revival of Development in the North (Programme d’Urgence pour la Relance du Développement dans les régions du Nord), as well as the Programme d’actions du Gouvernement et les Orientations et Priorités stratégiques du Gouvernement pour la période 2013-2018. They recalled the importance to fulfill the mutual commitments taken respectively by Mali and the international community during the 15 May 2013 Brussels high-level donors conference for the development of Mali, and reiterated the importance of a high-level follow-up. In this respect, they look forward to the conclusions of the follow-up meeting scheduled to take place in Bamako, on 7 November 2013. They noted again that the donors’ budgetary support for the PRED also depends on the Malian authorities’ determination to pursue the ongoing public finance reform. They welcomed the United Nations Priority Action Plan for Northern Mali (Plan d’actions prioritaires pour le Nord Mali) and its focus on economic recovery, social cohesion and the reestablishment of State authority. They noted the important gap in funding for the priority needs of the Action Plan and encouraged partners to support its implementation. They called on the Government and the donor community to forge an innovative relationship, on the basis of an agreed set of key priorities and a clear accountability framework that will lead Mali and international actors towards a more transparent and focused partnership, combating of bad governance and corruption, with Mali leading the process. They hailed the strategic choice of the Malian Government to work towards greater transparency and efficiency in the management of international aid.

15. Participants, acknowledging the multifaceted challenges facing the Sahelo-Saharan region, stressed the need for a holistic and coordinated approach to address these challenges. They recognized that the strengthening of State institutions, inclusive economic and social development, respect for human rights and the rule of law are necessary to ensure long-term security, development and stability in the Sahel.

16. Participants reiterated the need for sustained international support to the countries of Sahelo-Saharan region based on their priorities and leadership. They noted that the Security Council had welcomed the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which encompasses, in a holistic approach, security, humanitarian and development dimensions of the challenges in the region. They also noted the ongoing efforts by the AU to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach in support of the countries of the region. They look forward to the upcoming joint visit to be undertaken to the Sahel by the UN Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the President of the World Bank, the President of the African Development Bank and the EU Commissioner for Development. They noted with satisfaction the efforts being made by ECOWAS as part of the overall objective to ensure greater coordination among all concerned stakeholders. In this context, they underlined the need for close coordination among all concerned stakeholders.
17. Participants commended the AU for its work towards the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region, through the Nouakchott Process, launched in March 2013. They noted with appreciation the regular meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services, as well as the relevant Ministers, and acknowledged that the Process complements other efforts by the countries of the region, including the core countries. They encouraged the pursuit the Nouakchott Process and its enhancement, and called on international partners to extent their necessary support.

18. Participants extended their gratitude to the Malian authorities for the facilities provided for the successful convening of the SFG meeting, as well as for the warm welcome accorded to all delegations. They agreed to convene their next meeting within two months, at a date to be determined through consultations among the co-chairs and with the Malian authorities.