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Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the period from 29 November 2025 to 30 June 2026. It contains an overview of developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel and the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). It also provides an update on the status of implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and on the situation in the Lake Chad basin, pursuant to Security Council resolution [2349 \(2017\)](#).

II. Developments and trends in West Africa and the Sahel

2. The region witnessed political and security volatility as well as governance reforms and political dialogue in some countries. Electoral processes proceeded peacefully in Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Some countries saw opposition boycotts and narrowing political and civic space. In the aftermath of an unconstitutional change of government in Guinea-Bissau, there was a coup attempt in Benin and the commencement of legal proceedings against military officers accused of plotting a coup in Nigeria. Amid the blockades and attacks in Mali, the countries of the Confederation of Sahel States pursued institutional changes that expanded executive authority while further restricting political and civic space.

3. The Central Sahel and northern Nigeria experienced frequent attacks by non-State armed groups, including terrorist groups, underscoring the region's position as one of the areas most affected by terrorism globally. The activities of these groups intersected with transnational organized crime and were increasingly bolstered by the use of sophisticated tactics and weaponry, including drones and improvised explosive devices. On 25 April, a coordinated attack in Mali by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and the Front de libération de l'Azawad targeted strategic sites in northern and central regions, including the Bamako-Kati area, resulting in multiple casualties, including the Minister of Defence. Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, Boko Haram and other groups conducted asymmetric operations in northern Nigeria, leading to civilian casualties. Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin also launched attacks in northern Benin. The Confederation of Sahel States announced on 20 December 2025 the formation of a joint military force to combat terrorism and address insecurity and, on 15 April, increased the force's authorized strength from 5,000 to 15,000 troops.



4. Intraregional dialogue and cooperation gained renewed momentum, with both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Confederation of Sahel States reaffirming commitment to bridge their divide. High-level meetings held in the Gambia, Ghana, Senegal and Togo brought regional actors together to work towards solutions to address security challenges, with an increased focus on conflict drivers and root causes. ECOWAS concluded seven regional consultations ahead of its Special Summit on the Future of Regional Integration and, on 25 March, appointed the former Prime Minister of Guinea, Lansana Kouyaté, as chief negotiator with the Confederation of Sahel States.

5. The region recorded economic growth during the reporting period despite persistent debt burdens, external shocks and heightened food insecurity risks exacerbated by the Middle East conflict and its consequences. Humanitarian conditions deteriorated amid violence, conflict, displacement, food insecurity and climate-related vulnerabilities. Insecurity in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria continued to drive displacement and increase humanitarian needs, while funding shortfalls reduced humanitarian reach, leaving millions without adequate assistance.

A. Politics and governance

6. Elections were conducted in several countries. In Benin, the 12 April presidential election concluded the 2026 electoral cycle, following legislative and local elections on 11 January that resulted in control of Parliament and local councils by the ruling coalition. The ruling coalition candidate, Romuald Wadagni, was declared the winner on 23 April with 94 per cent of votes and assumed office on 24 May for a seven-year presidential term, renewable once.

7. In Côte d'Ivoire, legislative elections held on 27 December 2025 resulted in the ruling party securing a majority, winning 197 of 255 seats. The opposition party, Parti des peuples africains – Côte d'Ivoire, led by the former President, Laurent Gbagbo, boycotted the polls. Some other opposition actors rejected the results, alleging irregularities, intimidation and corruption. Voter turnout stood at 35 per cent.

8. In Cabo Verde, legislative elections were held on 17 May 2026. The opposition African Party for the Independence of Cabo Verde won 37 out of 72 seats, marking its return to power after a decade in opposition. The new Parliament, installed on 18 June, is led for the first time by a woman. The new Prime Minister, Francisco Carvalho, and his Government were sworn in on 19 June.

9. Election preparations are underway in Nigeria and the Gambia. The timetable for the 2027 general elections in Nigeria was published on 26 April, while the voter registration process is continuing, with 2,782,587 new registrants. In the Gambia, ahead of the presidential election scheduled for 5 December, opposition parties engaged in coalition talks for a unified candidate to compete against the President, Adama Barrow, who is seeking a third term.

10. Several countries faced destabilization attempts or allegations thereof. In Benin, national security forces, supported by ECOWAS troops that were deployed at the Government's request, foiled an alleged coup attempt on 7 December 2025. Subsequently, 31 suspects were placed in pretrial detention on charges of treason and offences against State security. In Burkina Faso, authorities reported a foiled alleged destabilization attempt on 3 January 2026, accusing the former transitional President, Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, of involvement. At the country's request, Damiba was detained and extradited from Togo on 17 January on economic crimes charges. Meanwhile, in Nigeria, trial commenced against several military officers and civilians

charged with participation in an alleged October 2025 attempt to overthrow the President, Bola Tinubu.

11. Transition processes remained a central feature of the political landscape in several countries. Following the unconstitutional change of Government of 26 November 2025 in Guinea-Bissau, a military high command was formed and adopted a transitional political charter on 5 December 2025, suspending parts of the 1996 Constitution and establishing a one-year transition. The military high command, led by Major General Horta Inta-A Na Man, appointed a new Government, dissolved key judicial oversight structures and reshuffled military leadership. A de facto transitional national council, established on 11 December 2025, adopted on 13 January 2026 a new constitution expanding executive powers. The military high command also revised legislation governing the electoral commission, political parties, the electoral code and the military legal framework. On 21 January, the de facto President announced elections for 6 December. The opposition, which opposes the current transition framework, rejected the timeline.

12. In Burkina Faso, the Transitional Legislative Assembly adopted the Revolution Charter on 27 March and renamed the Assembly as the People's Legislative Assembly. Seats held by dissolved political parties and groupings were allocated to other legislative groups and regional representation was adjusted to align with the reorganization of the country's administrative regions.

13. In the Niger, authorities adopted measures to further centralize executive authority. On 26 December 2025, the Council of Ministers adopted a national mobilization framework authorizing the requisition of persons, property and services for defence purposes. On 27 March 2026, the authorities established a territorial self-defence organization composed of volunteer auxiliaries of the defence and security forces. On 2 April, the five-year mandate of the deposed former President, Mohamed Bazoum, who continues to be held in detention, formally expired.

14. In Guinea, the political transition advanced amid concerns on the part of the opposition and civil society over the inclusivity and transparency of the 28 December 2025 presidential election. On 17 January, Mamadi Doumbouya was inaugurated as President and, on 27 January, the Prime Minister, Amadou Oury Bah, was reappointed to lead a 29-member Government that includes seven women. The 31 May legislative and local elections were held without the participation of the main opposition parties following their dissolution by decree on 6 March for non-compliance with statutory and legal obligations. The presidential coalition, led by Génération pour la modernité et le développement and its allies, won 127 of 147 National Assembly seats, with voter turnout at 53.84 per cent.

15. Constitutional and electoral reform processes proceeded across the region. In Benin, on 17 December 2025, the President, Patrice Talon, promulgated a constitutional amendment establishing a non-elected Senate with expanded powers and extending elected mandates from five to seven years, while maintaining a strict two-term presidential limit. In Ghana, the Constitution Review Committee submitted its report on 22 December 2025, recommending reforms to strengthen the Electoral Commission, introduce proportional representation, extend presidential terms to five years, streamline the Cabinet, cap Parliament at 276 seats and strengthen local governance through elected District Chief Executives and traditional authorities. In Nigeria, draft bills under the constitutional review process were transmitted to state legislatures on 24 November 2025 for review. On 17 February 2026, the Senate passed the Electoral Act 2026, later promulgated, introducing biometric voter accreditation, electronic transmission of results, higher campaign finance limits and revised electoral timelines. In Senegal, on 9 May, Parliament adopted a revision of the electoral code amending provisions for candidate eligibility. The President, Bassirou

Diomaye Faye, promulgated the law, which was published in the Official Gazette on 15 May.

16. Governance and accountability reforms were advanced in several countries. In Ghana, the Chief Justice established a specialized High Court division on 5 February to expedite cases of alleged corruption, illegal mining, State asset recovery and misuse of public funds in response to criticism over judicial delays. In Senegal, following national dialogues in 2024 and 2025, draft laws were published on 27 April 2026 to transform the Constitutional Council into a court with members serving six-year non-renewable terms, strengthen political party regulation and establish an independent electoral body to replace the national electoral commission under the Ministry of the Interior.

17. Progress on political dialogue initiatives was mixed. In Mauritania, preparations for the national dialogue stalled in late March amid opposition concerns over the inclusion of presidential term limits on the agenda. In Togo, political consultations resumed through the Cadre permanent de concertation on 19 February after a six-month pause. Discussions were focused on the functioning of the Cadre permanent de concertation and the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission, with committees established to propose reforms to the Commission and modalities for the participation of independent candidates in future elections.

18. In Sierra Leone, political tensions rose over divergent interpretations of the implementation of the Agreement for National Unity and the Tripartite Committee on Electoral Systems and Management Bodies Review recommendations, leading the opposition All People's Congress to boycott governance structures, including Parliament. The All People's Congress protested, inter alia, the appointment of a new chair of the Electoral Commission deemed contrary to the spirit of the Agreement for National Unity and the Tripartite Committee recommendations and expressed concern that constitutional amendments before Parliament, particularly the introduction of a proportional representation electoral system, would unduly favour the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party. Tensions eased following mediation by the international moral guarantors of the Agreement for National Unity and agreement between the Government and the All People's Congress on key actions to implement the Tripartite Committee recommendations, including the agreement of the All People's Congress to end its boycott.

19. In Senegal, on 27 April, the President presented four draft bills, related to: (a) revision of the Constitution; (b) the Constitutional Court; (c) political parties; and (d) the establishment of a new electoral code. On 22 May, the President dismissed the Prime Minister, Ousmane Sonko, and dissolved the Government. On 25 May, Ahmadou Al Amine Mohamed Lo was appointed Prime Minister, and a new Government was installed on 1 June. On 26 May, the National Assembly elected Mr. Sonko as its President following his reinstatement as a member of Parliament on 24 May.

20. Bilateral tensions persisted, particularly between Sahelian and certain coastal States. Relations between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire remained strained despite efforts to resume dialogue, including through a meeting of their Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 6 December in Ouagadougou. These efforts were affected by accusations over the alleged involvement of Côte d'Ivoire in the 3 January coup attempt in Burkina Faso. However, on 17 June, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Côte d'Ivoire, Téné Birahima Ouattara, expressed readiness to resume security cooperation with Mali and Burkina Faso, signalling willingness to work on pragmatic responses to transnational threats.

21. Relations between Benin and the Niger were strained following the 7 December 2025 coup attempt in Benin and the 29 January attack on a military base of the Niger in Niamey, with both sides trading accusations against each other. However, there has been visible rapprochement since the inauguration of the President on 24 May. The attendance of the Prime Minister of the Niger alongside ministerial representatives from Burkina Faso and Mali signalled détente after years of strained relations following the 2023 coup in the Niger.

22. The African Union and ECOWAS took steps to support constitutional order and regional stability. In Guinea-Bissau, mediation efforts contributed to the release of six political detainees following a 21 December 2025 visit by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal. An ECOWAS mission on 10 January 2026, led by the President of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio, the President of Senegal and the President of the Commission of ECOWAS, Omar Touray, engaged both transitional authorities and detained political figures. Subsequent facilitation by the Minister of Defence of Senegal on 30 January led to the release of opposition leader Domingos Simões Pereira from detention to house arrest and the departure of presidential candidate Fernando Dias from the Embassy of Nigeria in Bissau, where he had sought asylum. On 31 January, ECOWAS welcomed proposals by the de facto authorities for an inclusive transition Government and the establishment of a national transition council with opposition representation. However, the opposition rejected the proposals, citing a lack of consultation. On 5 March, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union called for coordinated support to dialogue.

23. The African Union and ECOWAS also supported electoral processes, deploying observation missions to countries that held elections. ECOWAS lifted remaining sanctions on Guinea and fully the country in its decision-making organs, while the African Union lifted its suspension and restored the country's participation in its activities.

24. At its ordinary session on 14 December 2025, the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS called for renewed security cooperation with Central Sahel countries and sustained support for African-led security financing, including through the implementation of Security Council resolution 2719 (2023). It endorsed Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger as non-regional members of the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development and the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money-Laundering in West Africa.

25. Meanwhile, at its second ordinary session, held on 23 December 2025, the College of Heads of State of the Confederation of Sahel States reviewed progress in defence, diplomacy and development, reaffirming people-centred priorities and commitment to dialogue with ECOWAS. The transitional President of Burkina Faso was designated the President of the Confederation for one year.

B. Security situation

26. The regional security landscape continued to be marked by inter-State tensions, terrorist and insurgent attacks, and transnational organized crime. Exploiting governance gaps, socioeconomic vulnerabilities and porous borders, terrorist groups and other non-State armed actors launched intensified and increasingly sophisticated attacks across the Central Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions in an attempt to consolidate territorial and economic control and undermine public trust in State authority. Despite renewed collaborative efforts, regional fragmentation and strained relations between the Confederation of Sahel States and some ECOWAS members continued to affect collective security responses.

27. In Mali, following the 11 December 2025 statement of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin designating fuel distributors as priority targets, the group burned five fuel tankers between December 2025 and January 2026 in Diboli and Kayes and destroyed three industrial facilities in the Kayes region. In response, the Malian Armed Forces intensified counter-terrorism efforts between 29 January and 26 February, reportedly killing 20 alleged fighters in the Menaka, Ségou and Mopti regions. Further operations in March against Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin bases in Medina reportedly killed 40 alleged terrorists and led to the rescue of 12 hostages.

28. On 25 April, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Front de libération de l'Azawad launched simultaneous and coordinated attacks against strategic targets in Bamako, Kati, Kidal, Gao, Mopti and Sévaré. The attacks resulted in civilian and military casualties, including the killing of the Minister of Defence. The next day, insurgents claimed control of Kidal, following the withdrawal of forces of the Malian security partner, Africa Corps. While military operations re-established control in southern regions, State authority in the northern hubs, particularly Gao, and other parts of the country remained contested or limited. In a national address on 28 April, the transitional President, Assimi Goïta, vowed to continue operations "until the total neutralization" of all groups involved, even as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin maintained a partial blockade of key supply routes into Bamako.

29. In the Niger, armed elements targeted the Niger-Benin oil pipeline in December 2025. On 28 and 29 January 2026, defence forces repelled an Islamic State Sahel Province attack on the Diori Hamani Airport in Niamey, which hosts the headquarters of the Confederation of Sahel States Joint Force, reportedly killing 20 assailants. Similar Islamic State Sahel Province attacks followed, including on Air Base 401 in Tahoua, where an estimated 21 soldiers were killed. Civilian casualties included the reported deaths of 31 civilians in Bosiye (Tillabéri) on 15 January, approximately 25 members of the Anzourou self-defence group on 25 February and 33 civilians in Birni-N'Konni (Tahoua) on 31 March. On 18 June, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin claimed an attack on the Diori Hamani Airport in Niamey.

30. Burkina Faso continued to experience recurrent attacks by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State Sahel Province, including drone-enabled operations. On 24 December 2025, security forces intercepted an armed drone during food distribution in Pama. Clashes between Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State Sahel Province were reported on 28 and 29 December 2025 in the Est and Sahel regions. On 14 February 2026, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin launched coordinated attacks on Titao, killing 38 civilians, followed by a 6 March attack on a police unit in Yamba, killing 30 officers. Authorities reported the killing of approximately 100 fighters in February. On 25 April, the Government announced plans to recruit 100,000 reservists and 12,000 military personnel by the end of 2026, giving priority to the current Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland.

31. In Nigeria, the North and Middle Belt regions experienced continued attacks, abductions and high levels of civilian casualties. On 21 December 2025, the remaining 130 of the 303 students and 12 teachers abducted in Niger State in November 2025 were released. Between 1 January and 10 February 2026, 1,258 civilians were killed in total, including 170 in a 3 February Kwara State attack by the Mahmuda, a Boko Haram splinter group. During the same period, 419 alleged fighters were killed. From 19 to 20 February, 50 civilians were killed in Zamfara State. In Borno State, attacks on 16 March in Maiduguri killed 23 civilians and injured 108, while coordinated attacks on 9 April against three military bases killed 18 military personnel. Security responses included United States air strikes, coordinated with the Nigerian Armed Forces, against Islamic State-linked targets in Sokoto State on

25 December 2025. Military operations killed 23 alleged fighters in Kano State on 2 January and 40 alleged Boko Haram fighters in Borno State on 15 and 16 January. An 11 April military air strike in Jilli, on the Borno-Yobe border, killed some 200 people, prompting the Government to announce an independent investigation amid allegations of high civilian casualties. On 16 May, an Islamic State leader, Abu-Bilal Al-Minuki, was reportedly killed in joint Nigeria-United States military operations.

32. In Benin, an army spokesperson reported that, on 4 March, 15 soldiers had been killed in an attack claimed by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin - on a military base in Karimama, Alibori Department. Several police stations and custom posts were also attacked in the northern departments of Alibori, Atacora and Borgou.

33. Farmer-herder violence, driven by competition over access to land and grazing resources, remained a persistent driver of insecurity in Nigeria. Incidents in the States of Jigawa, Plateau and Niger States during the reporting period resulted in civilian casualties and property damage. On 20 January, a clash in Guma Local Government Area in Benue State displaced 167 individuals.

34. Tensions rose in areas along the borders between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In response, the Presidents of the three countries met in Conakry on 16 March under the auspices of the Mano River Union, with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire participating as an observer. The leaders committed to preserving border stability, strengthening security cooperation and promoting peaceful dispute resolution. They also agreed to convene a Mano River Union summit to sustain dialogue, although a date has not been set. On 20 February, Ghana referred its maritime dispute with Togo to arbitration under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

35. Regional efforts to strengthen security cooperation continued during the reporting period. The High Level Consultative Conference on Regional Cooperation and Security, held in Accra on 29 and 30, January brought together regional leaders and partners, who committed to rebuilding trust and establishing a new security cooperation mechanism to replace the Accra Initiative. The ECOWAS Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff met from 25 to 27 February to advance the ECOWAS counter-terrorism force. The Committee urged intensified engagement with Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger to strengthen regional security cooperation and instructed the ECOWAS Commission to operationalize the regional counter-terrorism brigade in line with agreed funding mechanisms. ECOWAS subsequently approved \$2.85 million to support coastal States in addressing security challenges. Regional coordination efforts continued through ECOWAS maritime mechanisms, including discussions on the Combined Maritime Task Force and information-sharing systems under the Yaoundé Architecture. On 20 December 2025, the Confederation of Sahel States officially announced its joint force, headquartered in Niamey, with leaders calling for large-scale joint operations.

C. Socioeconomic context

36. The region recorded solid growth alongside persistent socioeconomic challenges. According to *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026*, published by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the average regional gross domestic product growth is projected to be 4.4 per cent in 2026, supported by, among other things, agricultural production, robust mining output, relatively high export earnings, particularly in some of the oil producing countries, and strong domestic demand. Strong growth was recorded in Benin (6.3 per cent), Côte d'Ivoire (6.3 per cent), Guinea (6.5 per cent), the Niger (6.7 per cent) and Senegal (6.5 per cent). However, rising debt-service obligations severely constrain fiscal space and public

investment, notably in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, diverting resources from the social services, climate action and development spending needed to sustain progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

37. In this context, external shocks risk undermining growth, adding to existing economic pressures and heightened food security risks. The Middle East conflict increased fuel and energy prices across the region and disrupted fertilizer supply chains and, as a result, inflation is projected to stay elevated at 10.4 per cent in 2026. Higher revenues in the oil-exporting countries of the region were partly offset by rising inflation and growing subsidy pressures.

38. Despite bilateral political tensions between some countries of the region, pragmatic cross-border cooperation continued to support trade and economic activity in several areas. On 9 February, the Niger and Nigeria reopened the Kamba border crossing, restoring a key trade corridor linking the Port of Cotonou to the Niger through Nigeria. Benin and the Niger also maintained limited trade and infrastructure cooperation. In Mali, attacks by armed groups disrupted transport routes through Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, prompting a diversification of corridors through Guinea and increased coordination with the Confederation of Sahel States.

D. Humanitarian context

39. The humanitarian situation in West Africa and the Sahel remained deeply concerning as conflict, insecurity, political instability, climate-related shocks and natural disasters continued to undermine the ability of governments and communities to meet the basic needs of their populations. These intersecting pressures pushed more people into vulnerability and further eroded local coping capacities. In areas affected by violence, women, children and young people continued to face serious abuses and violations of their rights, including sexual and gender-based violence. These risks were compounded by displacement, reduced access to essential services, economic hardship and limited social protection systems.

40. Population displacement remained high across the region. As at 31 May, approximately 6.8 million people were internally displaced, including over 6.3 million in Burkina Faso, the Niger and Nigeria. The region also hosted approximately 1.2 million refugees and asylum seekers, including 447,097 in the Niger, 184,461 in Mauritania, 182,029 in Mali, 138,581 in Nigeria and approximately 185,000 in coastal countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.

41. Humanitarian access remained severely constrained, particularly in the Sahel, due to ongoing insecurity, growing administrative restrictions and the closure of some non-governmental organizations in Burkina Faso and the Niger, affecting aid workers and humanitarian organizations. These constraints further impeded the delivery of life-saving assistance and contributed to rising operational costs.

42. Funding shortfalls continued to significantly undermine humanitarian response. As at 28 April, only 30 per cent, or \$913 million, of the \$3.1 billion required under the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans to assist 6.9 million people in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria in 2025 had been received. For 2026, an additional \$2.4 billion is required under a prioritized approach targeting only people with the most severe needs, of which only 14 per cent had been received (\$342 million) as at 28 April.

E. Human rights

43. Civic and political rights remained constrained in several countries, even as transitional justice processes in others recorded steady progress. In Burkina Faso, the dissolution on 29 January of political parties and groupings was followed by the repeal on 9 February of legislation governing political parties. Furthermore, from mid-April to May, 811 associations were suspended for failure to renew their governing bodies, with 118 of those subsequently dissolved. On 9 June, two Muslim associations were suspended while consultations on a draft law on religious freedoms were conducted in June.

44. Following the unconstitutional change of Government, Guinea-Bissau witnessed bans on demonstrations and press conferences, intimidation of human rights defenders and closure of party headquarters. In Côte d'Ivoire, human rights concerns were raised over arrests linked to electoral disputes following the presidential election, as well as instances of prolonged pretrial detention and limited access to legal counsel.

45. In Senegal, prosecutions for spreading false information and insulting or causing offence to the Head of State continued. In addition, there were allegations of excessive use of force by defence and security forces during university protests in Dakar that led to the death of a student on 9 February. In the Gambia, 14 individuals were arrested on 8 May for unlawful assembly during a commemoration of the first anniversary of the Gambians against Looted Assets movement. They have since been released on bail.

46. Concerns persisted over arbitrary detention of political opponents and allegations of enforced disappearances. In Benin, opposition figures arrested following the 7 December 2025 attempted coup remained in pretrial detention. In Guinea, the whereabouts of several activists and political actors remained unknown. In Guinea-Bissau, a newly established three-judge panel of the Superior Military Court ordered, on 4 June, that opposition leader Simões Pereira be maintained under house arrest as a suspect in the alleged unconstitutional attempted change of Government. In Guinea-Bissau, the body of youth leader Vigário Luís Balanta, reportedly beaten to death, was discovered on 31 March, and two other activists have reportedly disappeared.

47. In Mali, the former Prime Ministers Moussa Mara and Choguel Maïga remained in detention on expression-related and economic crime charges, respectively. The prominent lawyer and opposition figure Mountaga Tall reportedly abducted by unknown masked individuals on 3 May, remains incommunicado. His son reportedly went missing after attempting to visit him on 16 May. The journalist Youssouf Daba Diawara, detained since 30 April, is accused of spreading false news and undermining the credibility of the State. In the Niger, calls continued for the release of former President Bazoum and his wife from detention at the presidential palace in Niamey. On 6 and 7 May, journalists Hassane Zada Badjé and Gazali Abdou Tasawa were released after serving more than eight months of imprisonment and three months of pretrial detention respectively, while other journalists remained in detention. In Togo, presidential clemency led to the release of 1,511 prisoners, including 75 political detainees. However, 68 remained in detention, including the former Minister of Defence, Marguerite Gnacadé.

48. Transitional justice processes showed progress. Liberia is advancing towards establishing the War and Economic Crimes Court, with the requisite legislation currently under consideration by the legislature. In the Gambia, the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission moved forward with the inauguration in January of the Special Criminal Division of

the High Court and the swearing-in on 8 May of a special prosecutor to lead investigations and prosecution.

F. Gender and youth

49. Progress under the women and peace and security and the youth and peace and security agendas in the region remained uneven. Electoral processes yielded limited gains in women's political representation. In Benin, the legislative elections resulted in women holding 25 per cent of seats in the National Assembly, unchanged from the previous legislature. The presidential election saw the re-election of Mariam Chabi Talata as Vice President. In Côte d'Ivoire, women secured only 13.4 per cent of parliamentary seats following the legislative elections.

50. At the regional level, ECOWAS and partners continued to support women's participation and leadership through consultations, capacity-building and policy dialogue. A regional consultation in Accra on 20 February reaffirmed commitments to strengthening women's representation in elected bodies, including by establishing a target of 50 per cent by 2035.

51. Youth-focused initiatives were implemented across Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal, supporting peacebuilding, social cohesion, human rights, climate action, migration and employment. Senegal adopted a national action plan on youth, peace and security on 18 December 2025.

52. At the regional level, ECOWAS promoted youth empowerment and civic engagement through its Youth and Sports Development Centre and regional consultations, including in Accra from 17 to 20 February, in support of its Vision 2050 and its human capital development agenda. These efforts strengthened youth inclusion in governance, peacebuilding and regional integration.

53. Insecurity continued to disproportionately affect women and girls, including through its impact on access to education and civilian protection. In May, security forces in Kogi State in Nigeria rescued 23 abducted individuals, including children abducted from an orphanage on 26 April, with the final group released around 7 May. An additional 13 victims were rescued on 9 May near Anyigba. In Mali, a 10 December 2025 attack on a teacher-training institute in Nioro resulted in civilian casualties and disrupted education services.

54. Young people across the region remain vulnerable to insecurity and structural inequalities, including recruitment by armed groups, trafficking in persons, misinformation and limited economic opportunities. Drug use among young people is a growing public health and security concern, particularly with the rapid spread of kush in coastal countries.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

A. Good offices and special assignments of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel

55. The Special Representative engaged national, regional and international partners to foster trust and strengthen cooperation on shared security and political challenges, supporting initiatives by the African Union, ECOWAS and other partners on collective responses to address terrorism, mitigate tensions and promote inclusive dialogue and constitutional order.

56. On 8 December 2025, he attended the inauguration of the President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, engaging national stakeholders to encourage dialogue and reduce post-electoral polarization following the presidential election.

57. The Special Representative supported the efforts of regional partners towards a return to constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. On 30 November and 1 December 2025, he participated in an ECOWAS mission to Bissau, led by the President of Sierra Leone and Chairperson of ECOWAS, Julius Maada Bio, and in the ECOWAS Authority meeting of 14 December 2025 in Abuja, which called for a short, inclusive transition and a credible electoral road map.

58. On 3 March, the Special Representative met with the President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, to discuss greater coherence among regional security frameworks, including through the Sahel–Gulf of Guinea approach proposed by Ghana to address regional fragmentation. On 24 March, he met with the President of the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja to discuss relations between ECOWAS and the Confederation of Sahel States, border tensions and regional dialogue mechanisms. From 15 to 19 April, he was in Togo for the launch of the Government's Sahel strategy and met with the President of the Council of Ministers, Faure Gnassingbé. Regional leaders and representatives, including from the Confederation of Sahel States, and international partners also attended the launch. The Special Representative also visited the northern Savanes region to inaugurate the United Nations House, seeing first-hand United Nations support for national efforts to address development and humanitarian needs alongside security imperatives.

59. The Special Representative visited the Niger from 6 to 9 April, where he met the Prime Minister and senior officials. While acknowledging trust deficits with neighbouring countries, interlocutors expressed openness to renewing engagement with ECOWAS and appreciation for United Nations support. During the visit, the Special Representative co-chaired the launch of the 2026 humanitarian response plan, drawing attention to critical funding gaps.

60. From 13 to 20 April, the Deputy Special Representative participated, alongside ECOWAS and the Commonwealth, in the third mission of the international moral guarantors to Sierra Leone. In a highly polarized context, with many reforms envisioned under the Agreement for National Unity either stalled or disputed, the mission mediated between the Government and the opposition All People's Congress, resulting in an agreement on key measures to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement and the Tripartite Committee recommendations.

61. On 23 and 24 April, the Deputy Special Representative participated in a workshop in Banjul entitled "Strengthening security and stabilization in the Sahel and West Africa: bridging good governance, regional cooperation and multilateral responses", organized by the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel. The workshop brought together national, regional and international partners to discuss holistic, trust-based approaches to peacebuilding and development in the region.

62. On 19 May, the Special Representative met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, Cheikh Niang, for an exchange about the current situation in and challenges of the region and the role Senegal expects to play as the upcoming President of the ECOWAS Commission. The Minister commended the United Nations for encouraging dialogue and cooperation between regional leaders.

63. The Special Representative sustained engagement with partners to reinforce alignment on regional priorities. He visited Washington, D.C. from 17 to 18 February and Paris from 18 to 19 March for consultations that included emphasis on the need for coordinated support to dialogue and stabilization efforts. On 16 and 17 May, he attended the meeting of the European Union Special Envoys for the Sahel in Brussels,

which underscored the need for a coordinated, pragmatic and integrated engagement in the Sahel. On 20 and 21 April, he participated in the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security, at which he engaged with participants on regional integration, national ownership and collective responses to address fragmentation across the region.

B. Enhancing regional and subregional partnerships to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel

64. UNOWAS continued to strengthen its partnership with ECOWAS. It contributed to all seven thematic consultations organized by ECOWAS in preparation for its upcoming Special Summit on the Future of Regional Integration, as well as to reform processes, including the validation of the ECOWAS Economic, Social and Cultural Council framework at a meeting held in Accra, from 11 to 13 March, and discussions on restructuring the Council of the Wise. UNOWAS participated on 4 December in the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja and in the ECOWAS pre-electoral mission to Cabo Verde from 1 to 8 March.

65. UNOWAS contributed to strengthening security sector reform governance and coordinated responses to emerging threats. Notably, the Office participated in the High-Level Regional Dialogue on Weapons and Ammunition Management in Accra on 4 and 5 February and in a regional symposium on rule of law, human security and accountability, held in Abuja from 30 March to 3 April, with a focus on strengthening ECOWAS capacity to support rights-based security sector reform approaches. From 23 to 27 March, UNOWAS participated in a follow-up assessment to Togo to assess the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism.

66. UNOWAS and the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), jointly supported the operationalization of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region, participating in the third joint task force meeting on 2 December 2025, the regional validation workshop from 12 to 14 February 2026 and technical consultations on 25 and 26 March that revised and validated territorial action plans, a critical step towards localized implementation, coordination and monitoring. The Special Representative also joined the seventh Steering Committee meeting, which approved all operational documents.

67. On maritime security cooperation, UNOWAS supported the launch of the United Nations support task force to the Gulf of Guinea Commission on 29 December 2025, including through the development of operational and action plans to contribute to the implementation of the Yaoundé Architecture in coordination with Member States, the Economic Community of Central African States and ECOWAS.

68. UNOWAS intensified engagement to address the impact of environmental shocks and natural disasters on regional security and stability. On 27 and 28 January, UNOWAS convened a dialogue on water diplomacy, bringing together organizations of the Lake Chad basin, United Nations entities and regional institutions on the margins of the High-level Preparatory Meeting for the 2026 United Nations Water Conference, held in Dakar. The dialogue reaffirmed water diplomacy as a tool for conflict prevention, climate resilience and regional integration. At a European Union climate security dialogue, held in Abidjan from 25 to 27 March, UNOWAS advocated for the integration of climate risk into peace and security responses and contributed to a Gulf of Guinea climate peace and security assessment led by the United Nations Environment Programme.

69. In partnership with UNOCA, UNOWAS accompanied the Informal Expert Group on Climate, Peace and Security of the Security Council on a field visit to Chad from 7 to 12 December 2025. The visit highlighted climate change as a driver of insecurity in the Lake Chad basin, eastern Chad and the wider Sahel, and identified opportunities for regional cooperation and resilience-building.

C. Promotion of good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and gender mainstreaming

70. UNOWAS supported the women and peace and security and youth and peace and security agendas through the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) in Dakar on 11 December 2025. The event validated findings of the UNOWAS-ECOWAS 10-year impact assessment, launched the West Africa and Sahel youth manifesto and called for stronger youth representation, opportunities and protection frameworks.

71. UNOWAS facilitated regional and cross-regional dialogue on the women and peace and security and youth and peace and security agendas, including a virtual exchange with women peacebuilders from West Africa, the Sahel and Colombia on 25 March and a consultation on the ECOWAS Vision 2050 in Senegal from 2 to 4 March. Both exchanges underscored persistent underrepresentation of women and youth and called for quotas, dedicated financing and stronger leadership pathways.

72. On 14 April, the Special Representative chaired a working group exchange on the women and peace and security and youth and peace and security agendas, identifying governance deficits, socioeconomic exclusion and weak institutional trust as drivers of instability and stressing the need for more inclusive approaches to peace and security.

D. Implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel

73. The implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel was advanced through nationally led programmatic approaches. Following their official launch on 6 February, Burkina Faso formally approved its three flagship programmes as integrated platforms to advance national development priorities and called for the alignment of United Nations agency programming and cooperation frameworks with the flagship architecture. This milestone marks a transition from programme design to nationally led implementation, offering a replicable model that is anchored in national ownership, coherence and resource efficiency.

74. Before its mandate concluded in December 2025, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel intensified resource mobilization efforts. The 10 countries covered by the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel submitted \$337 million in project proposals to the Islamic Development Bank covering climate-resilient agriculture, food systems and value chains; renewable energy access and climate-smart infrastructure; youth employment, innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems; education, digital development and social protection; and governance, cross-border cooperation and stabilization. The United Nations system has sustained coordination of the integrated strategy through the Regional Office for Africa of the Development Coordination Office and the resident coordinators' offices in the region. UNOWAS supported a 2013–2025 evaluation of United Nations system coordination in the Sahel, conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office, which assessed how

the United Nations system organized, governed, financed and communicated development coordination in the Sahel since the introduction of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. Preliminary findings and recommendations were discussed during a workshop held in Dakar on 12 May.

E. Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

75. The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission continued to implement the 2002 judgment of the International Court of Justice, advancing towards the final phase of boundary demarcation. From 28 November to 10 December 2025, the joint technical team conducted a field mission validating coordinates included in the Geneva agreement 2025 on the remaining disputed areas. The Subcommission on Demarcation adopted these findings at its meeting in Douala, Cameroon, on 2 and 3 February 2026. They now await approval by both Heads of Delegation before the final demarcation phase, which will include pillar construction, final mapping and preparation of the boundary statement. The Special Representative undertook bilateral engagements in Yaoundé and Abuja from 23 to 25 March to encourage validation of the Subcommission report and confirmation of the boundary line.

76. From 4 to 7 February, the project steering committee met to operationalize the pillar construction phase and held preliminary discussions on a transition plan guiding the Mixed Commission's activities towards mandate completion. The transition plan is aimed at ensuring a smooth handover to national authorities and the sustainability of confidence-building measures along the shared border through continued cooperation with the United Nations and other partners.

IV. Observations and recommendations

77. I welcome the holding of peaceful elections in Benin and Cabo Verde, while noting that the security situation, particularly in the Sahel region, continues to be shaped by acute terrorist threats. The 25 April attacks in Mali marked a significant escalation. Coordination between Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and the Front de libération de l'Azawad points to an increasingly complex overlap between terrorist and insurgent agendas, revealing greater coordination, operational sophistication and the ability to exert simultaneous pressure across multiple fronts. These dynamics heighten risks of prolonged instability, regional spillover and further expansion of terrorist activity across the Sahel.

78. In this environment, marked by persistent distrust between some central Sahel and coastal States and fuelled in part by geopolitical dynamics, I reiterate the importance of dialogue, confidence-building, coordination and regional solidarity to address these challenges. I commend and encourage recent initiatives along these lines, including the appointment by ECOWAS of Lansana Kouyaté as Chief Negotiator for engagement with the Confederation of Sahel States, enhanced African Union engagement through a strengthened African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel and efforts led by countries of the region, notably Ghana and Togo, to rebuild trust, strengthen cooperation and reopen dialogue channels between coastal and central Sahel States. I welcome and encourage the renewed engagements between Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. I also urge countries of the Mano River Union to utilize conflict mitigation and dialogue mechanisms to prevent cross-border tensions that threaten local populations. I reaffirm the continued political support of the United Nations for these initiatives, alongside development and humanitarian initiatives in support of affected populations.

79. I encourage countries of the region to pursue constitutionally based governance reforms grounded in transparency, inclusion and respect for human rights and the rule of law. I encourage national authorities and political stakeholders to strengthen public confidence in electoral institutions and to take all necessary steps to ensure transparent, inclusive and peaceful electoral processes.

80. The narrowing of civic and political space in several countries remains a concern. I call on national authorities to safeguard fundamental freedoms and to ensure due process and the humane treatment of detainees. Progress in transitional justice processes demonstrates that accountability and reconciliation can reinforce long-term stability. I encourage sustained international support to these efforts, which are essential to national unity and lasting peace.

81. Women and youth continue to face structural barriers, insecurity and limited access to resources. I reiterate my call for renewed efforts to ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation in governance, decision-making and peacebuilding, supported by integrated strategies linking education, skills development, economic empowerment and civic engagement.

82. Socioeconomic pressures – youth unemployment, weak service delivery, climate shocks and the crowding out of priority development public spending by rising debt service – remain among the most powerful drivers of instability in the region, and addressing them is integral to prevention. I urge Governments of the region to prioritize inclusive economic reforms, youth employment programmes and strengthened social protection to reinforce the social contract and reduce vulnerability to illegal activity. Sustained progress will require investment at scale in the Sustainable Development Goals at a moment when fiscal space is contracting. Across the region, government resources needed for health, education and development are increasingly diverted to debt-servicing. I, therefore, continue to urge the reform of the international financial architecture and for financing for development commensurate with the scale of need so that countries of the region can escape the debt trap and invest in their people.

83. Climate variability and environmental degradation remain threat multipliers, exacerbating intercommunal tensions, displacement and livelihood disruption. I encourage national Governments and regional partners to adopt integrated approaches, including transboundary water cooperation.

84. The humanitarian situation in the region remains alarming. I call upon international partners to fully fund humanitarian appeals.

85. I welcome progress in implementing the International Court of Justice judgment on the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary dispute, including transition planning as the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission nears completion of its mandate.

86. The United Nations remains fully committed to peace, constitutional governance and regional cooperation in West Africa and the Sahel. I thank ECOWAS, the African Union and regional partners for their continued collaboration with UNOWAS, and commend the Special Representative, UNOWAS personnel and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their dedication.