



UNOWAS *Magazine*

Together for peace

Quarterly magazine of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

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**UNOWAS, an active and
mobilized partner to
support countries
of the sub-region**



OBJECTIFS DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE



EDITO



Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF

Special Representative
of the United Nations Secretary General
for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS)

"UNOWAS will continue to act in close coordination with the countries of the subregion, the United Nations system, and regional and international partners, to make West Africa and the Sahel an area of peace and development"

West Africa and the Sahel is a region facing two recurring realities: on the one hand, the persistence of multiple challenges that hamper its development, and on the other, the existence of human and material resources, necessary to development.

These two realities arouse frustrations, and engender fatalism, because the challenges persist, and the means likely to contain them, do not give the expected results.

Indeed, the persistence of challenges can be seen and experienced every day. This is the case with insecurity and the terrorist threat, violent extremism, drug trafficking and organized crime of all kinds, climate change and its impact on the populations' living conditions and security. In addition, despite notable progress noted in all the countries of the sub-region, which must be welcomed and supported, there are political tensions and crises, often linked to elections, the lack of consensus on political and institutional reforms.

But people in West Africa and the Sahel, especially young people and women, yearn for a better life and future, and continue to ask for more development, social justice, the rule of law and security. We must – all together – raise our level of commitment to meet this legitimate and vital expectation if we are to change this reality and protect future generations.

Since taking office as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the

Sahel, last May, I have intensified meetings and consultations with various actors as well as national, regional and international partners to reaffirm the support of the United Nations in general, and of UNOWAS in particular, to the countries of the sub-region in their fight against the multiple challenges mentioned above, and to encourage them to stay mobilized to further consolidate peace and stability.

It is true that the COVID-19 pandemic, added to the already full list of challenges, has had a severe impact on the economies of the countries of the sub-region, and has disrupted their development programs.

Undoubtedly, the momentum of international solidarity displayed since the beginning of the health crisis will have to be maintained and - even reinforced - to help the countries of the sub-region curb this pandemic and its consequences, both health and social-economic.

This ordeal, as difficult as it is, is also an opportunity to revitalize our commitments in favor of development, good governance, and the consolidation of peace and democracy.

UNOWAS, through its activities and its role entrusted to it by the United Nations Security Council, will continue to act in close coordination with the countries of the sub-region, the United Nations system, and regional partners and international organizations, so that West Africa and the Sahel become a space of peace and development.

ANNADIF: “UNOWAS is an active and mobilized partner to support countries of the sub-region”

Upon taking office last April, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF, undertook a series of trips and meetings with countries officials of the sub-region, and regional and international partners. Objective: Reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations and strengthen the partnership to help consolidate peace and good governance in West Africa and the Sahel.

After more than five years at the head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mahamat ANNADIF arrived in Dakar to head the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), a regional political mission covering 16 countries.

With a vast experience and a good knowledge of the sub-region and its major actors, the new Special Representative is also well informed of the challenges and obstacles facing countries, and of how the United Nations and its regional and international partners can support to effectively contribute to peace and development. Also, barely installed in his new functions, Mahamat ANNADIF set himself the task to meet national authorities and main actors whose involvement is increasingly valuable given the nature of the challenges, and which requires increased coordination, even permanent.

On the program: intense activity marked by a tour in the sub-region, an intervention on 19 June at the 59th ordinary summit of ECOWAS, and a briefing on 8 July 8 to the UN Security Council.

During his West African tour, the Special Representative listened to the heads of state and officials of the visited countries to understand their expectations and discuss the necessary means to be implemented to help consolidate peace and development. Because, beyond the challenges facing the sub-region, the tour took place in a particular period, of the COVID-19 pandemic whose health and economic consequences had a severe impact on development programs., threatening, in some cases, the social cohesion.

To all his interlocutors, the Special Representative renewed the commitment of the United Nations in general, and of UNOWAS in particular, to play its role as an active and mobilized partner to support the countries of the sub-region in their efforts towards peace and development. “We must - all together - further raise our commitment to meet the legitimate expectations of populations who aspire to a better life,” he insisted during each visit.

“We must - all together - further raise our commitment to meet the legitimate expectations of populations who aspire to a better life.



The efforts made by the countries of the subregion, as necessary as important, will only be effective if they are part of a coordinated regional approach. Indeed, the observation relating to the security situation and its consequent terrorist threats, the impact of climate change on living conditions and the protection of human lives, the various trafficking and organized crimes which abound across the region, requires a shared regional vision and coordinated action by the countries of the sub-region and partners.

This is the meaning of the message that the Special Representative conveyed to the heads of state and governments gathered on 19 June in Accra, capital of Ghana, for the fifty-ninth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). During this first participation as Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, he also underlined the importance for member states to uphold their efforts to improve respect for human rights, access to justice and the participation of young people and women in decision-making processes, while reaffirming the commitment of UNOWAS to strengthen its partnership with ECOWAS to contribute to the consolidation of peace and democracy in the sub-region.

After ECOWAS, the Special Representative had the opportunity to exchange with members of the Security Council during his presentation on 8 July of the Secretary General's report on the activities of UNOWAS and the situation in West Africa and the

▲
Meeting with President of
Senegal, Macky Sall,
11 May 2021

ANNADIF has undertaken a series of trips and meetings with officials of the countries of the sub-region

Sahel. Indeed, his first briefing as Head of UNOWAS enabled ANNADIF to take stock of the regional situation, and to call on international partners to step up their mobilization to help the countries of the sub-region to cope with the many challenges threatening them.

Upon taking office, the Special Representative also met with the various United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators, whose unwavering commitment and important work in the service of the populations and development of West Africa he praised, and the Sahel.



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Interview with Ana Patricia Graca

United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cabo Verde

"By ensuring transparent elections and democratic alternation throughout 46 years of independence, the country stands out as an example in the region with noticeable development gains in health, education, poverty reduction, strong institutions and a tradition of peaceful and credible elections and transitions"



In June 2018, Ana Patricia Graca, was appointed as the Resident Coordinator to lead the United Nations (UN) Development System in Cabo Verde, and to coordinate the operational activities for development of the UN in support of countries' efforts towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda and supporting the UN Country Team (UNCT) in the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2018-2022). She accepted to share with UNOWAS Magazine her perspectives about Cabo Verde and the UN support. Interview.

You have been serving as the UN Resident Coordinator in Cabo Verde since 2018. How can you describe the country?

Located in the middle of the Atlantic off the West African coast, some 500 kilometres from Senegal, Cabo Verde is an archipelago made up of 10 islands, nine of which are inhabited. It is a beautiful country known worldwide for its spectacular landscapes and welcoming spirit Morabeza as well as a consolidated, modern and inclusive democracy also, with good governance and solid human capital. By ensuring transparent elections and democratic alternation throughout 46 years of independence, the country stands out as an example in the region with noticeable development gains in health, education, poverty reduction, strong institutions and a tradition of peaceful and credible elections and transitions. Based on this strong institutional framework and well-functioning checks and balances, education, health systems, reached indicators well above regional average. This successful journey was marked by the graduation as a lower Middle-Income Country in 2007 and the achievement of most Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

More concretely, can you spotlight key achievements- and what about the challenges facing Cabo Verde today?

Cabo Verde has made notable progress on women's human rights, mainstreaming of gender equality, especially in tourism, gender-sensitive budgeting with the introduction of gender markers in the budget system (January, 2018), the introduction of the gender equality module in secondary schooling (October, 2020), a first-of-its-kind challenge in Africa and in professional training courses, the parity law that contributed to increasing women's political participation in the last municipal and legislative elections (October, 2020). Cabo Verde is also working to implement a care system to liberate women in order to participate in other public spheres.

Despite its development gains, as a Small Island Development State (SIDS), Cabo Verde faces structural constraints such as small domestic market and fiscal basis, relative isolation and fragmentation, high per-capita cost of services, among others – and a growingly adverse conjuncture – global economic shocks, impact of climate change with three years of consecutive draught (2017-2019), and now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cabo Verde was growing and was on the track for sustainable development in 2019 but was harshly impacted by the pandemic. COVID-19 disrupted the sustainable development path in an unprecedented manner, and lessons from 2008 economic crisis draw a perspective of slow recovery. Mostly due to a 70% decrease in tourism revenues, GDP decreased by 14.8% in 2020, driving up unemployment and poverty, despite the cushion provided so far by fiscal measures and remittances. The crisis is still unfolding as shown by the continued negative growth of 11% in the first quarter of 2021, compared with the same period last year. Public debt has increased exponentially in 2021 – reaching 155% of GDP –, revenues decreased by 25%, and Official Development Assistance was cut by half between 2020 and 2021, further limiting fiscal space for response, recovery and sustainable development.

In this specific development landscape, Cabo Verde's priorities have been defined by the State in a broad, participatory process and with United Nations and other partners contribution to the governments "Ambition 2030" – the national strategy for the Decade of Action. The country priorities are to invest in human and institutional capital, digitalization of public administration and businesses, renewable energies, blue economy, and the added value of tourism for local economic development have been identified as the five SDG accelerators. Four transversal challenges have

been defined: climate change, regional development and convergence between islands, justice and human security, and gender equality and youth empowerment.

The main thematic priorities for 2021 are the continuity of COVID-19 response in social protection, health and education sector, rollout of the vaccine implementation plan, economic recovery and food security. Actions for the medium to long term need to continue or resume, such as the support to institutional capacity building for important public administration reforms that are ongoing and the acceleration of economic diversification to limit vulnerability and unleash the potential of the green and blue economy while guaranteeing equal opportunities to women.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Cabo Verde Ambition 2030 resulted in structural changes and priorities, namely related to fighting impoverishment and ensuring health security and, especially, to the diversification of the economy, for which the expansion of public investment is urgent – this, within a context of over-indebtedness aggravated by the pandemic.

Building new partnerships will be critical to address in a transformative manner obstacles and vulnerabilities, exacerbated by the pandemic and hampering SDG-



related achievement. Regional integration in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), articulation with SIDS countries, especially SIDS AIS (Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea), and mobilization of technological and financial resources - with a priority for private sector involvement - are critical.

But the first biggest current challenge the country needs to overcome is to vaccinate, during this year, at least 70% of the population and generalize in 2022, resume tourism and economic growth, and overcome the challenges that determine the continuation of sustainable development path. This is a pre-condition the country has assumed to enable the development of human capital, health, resilience, the diversification of the economy, promoting alongside tourism the blue and green economy as well as digitalization, youth employment, gender equality, decentralization, regional development and convergence.

Looking forward, what is the UN plan to better support Cabo Verde?

The United Nations family in Cabo Verde is a long standing and recognized partner of the country and our focus priority is on supporting the country response to the health, social and economic crisis caused by the pandemic whilst continuing to invest on people, planet, prosperity, peace and governance and promoting partnerships. The UN Cooperation Framework is fully aligned with the country sustainable development strategy and Agenda 2030 and all agencies, funds and programme work with dozens of national institutions, civil society and private sector to advance on the economic, social and environmental priorities.

With the contributions of WHO, ILO, FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNODC, UNIDO, IOM, UN-Habitat and UNESCO, this year, 40% of our UNCT Joint Work Plan is dedicated to human capital and putting people at the centre, supporting health systems including vaccination, maternal health care, child protection, expanding social protection and food security, focusing on informal workers and education particularly on early childhood. Youth employment and economic opportunities for women are at the centre of the UN support to economic diversification, notably on blue and green economy and innovative financing, with a strong emphasis on strengthening national institutions, public administration, criminal justice and the rule of law. In 2022, the UNCT will develop its new 2023-2027 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework together with the government and all partners. The United Nations is determined to work side by side with Cabo Verde for the achievement of the sustainable development agenda and inclusive peace and prosperity for all, focusing on the ones further behind.

Humanitarian crisis in the Sahel worsens

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (OCHA), 29 million Sahelians will need humanitarian assistance and protection in 2021, five million more than the previous year.



29 million people across the sahel are in need of life saving assistance

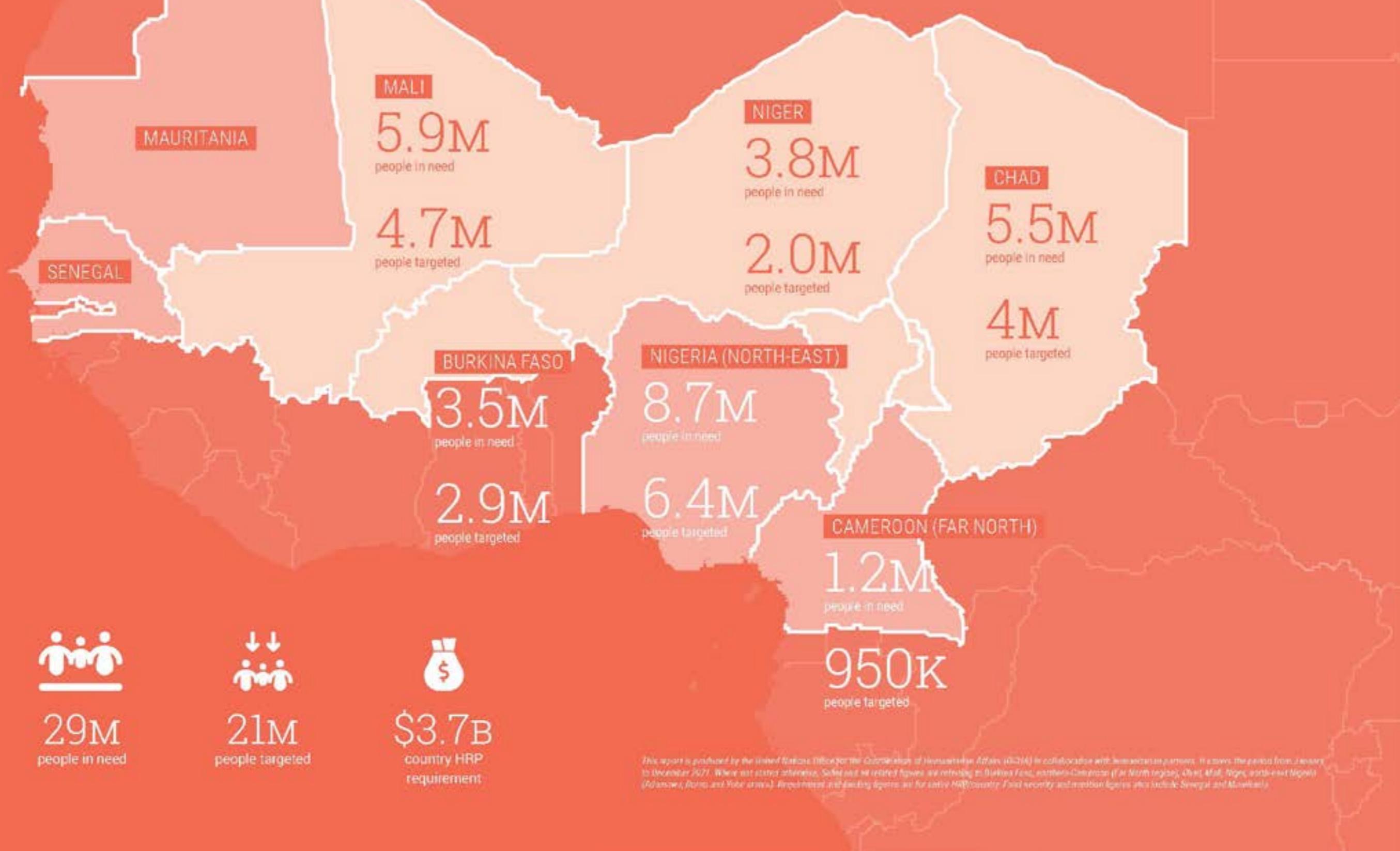
The Sahelian population continues to face an increase in humanitarian and protection needs. This year, a new record high of 29 million people across Burkina Faso, northern Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and north-east Nigeria are in need of life saving assistance. This is five million more than last year and a 52 per cent increase since 2019. Escalating conflict, rising food insecurity and the negative ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are among the main factors contributing to needs rising. The region also counts among the world's most exposed to disasters and is a climate change hotspot, severely impacting fragile livelihoods. Over the last five years, major flooding almost doubled, strongly affecting already vulnerable populations.

(To be continued page 15)



The Sahel

Escalating needs in a regional crisis



Needs are outpacing available resources and aid workers are sounding the alarm

Violent attacks are multiplying: security incidents increased eight-fold in the Central Sahel and tripled in the Lake Chad basin since 2015 with a devastating impact on the population. To escape violence, people are often forced to flee their homes, seeking safety in nearby fields or villages, sometimes multiple times over time. Across the Sahel, 5.5 million people are uprooted, more people than ever before. Large-scale displacement is straining weak services and scarce natural resources, also impacting on host communities, reinforcing the risk of jeopardizing social cohesion.

Insecurity and attacks are also severely disrupting basic social services. More than 5,000 schools are closed or non-operational across the region, a 22 per cent increase since 2019, putting at risk the future of hundreds of thousands of children. School closures represent an additional barrier to learning, especially for young girls. Women and girls are particularly affected by the crisis, yet their needs too often are unmet. Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services keeps taking a heavy toll. Maternal mortality in the most affected areas is much higher than the national average. Furthermore, Gender-based violence (GBV) incidents are spiking. Local communities are expressing concern over increasing and widespread risks for women and girls of being abducted, married by force, sexually assaulted and raped.

The highly volatile context is disrupting Sahel food systems, with malnutrition and food insecurity reaching record peaks. Only a few months into 2021, almost 14 million people are estimated to face severe food insecurity across the region during the lean season, unless urgent action is taken to prevent further deterioration and loss of human lives. The cross-border areas of the Central Sahel and Lake Chad Basin are among the hotspots of hunger in the region. These rural areas are difficult to reach and showcase high social vulnerabilities, and they are home to already exposed populations who suffer strongly from violence and insecurity.

This unparalleled situation requires immediate action, yet needs are outpacing available resources and aid workers are sounding the alarm. In the last five years, on average, only 57 per cent of the required funds were received. This trend has a dramatic impact on the lives of the most vulnerable populations. In 2021, halfway through the year, only 14 per cent of the \$3.7 billion required to respond to needs in the six countries have been funded.

For more details on the current humanitarian crisis in the Sahel: <https://bit.ly/2021SahelHNRO>

To learn more about OCHA's activities: <https://www.unocha.org/sahel>

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Reinventing, together, a better future for Sahel populations

The G5 Sahel and the United Nations are committed to strengthening their partnership and the implementation of joint projects.

A consultation meeting took place on 20 - 21 May 2021, in Dakar, in the presence of the Chad Minister of Economy, Development Planning and International Cooperation of and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the G5 Sahel, the Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, and the United Nations Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel.

During this meeting, the G5 Sahel and the United Nations pledged to reinforce their partnership and the implementation of joint projects. A declaration was adopted reaffirming the importance of the current partnership and the need for an improvement in the implementation of common actions in line with the Development and Security Strategy of the G5 Sahel, and the Integrated Strategy of the Nations. United Nations for the Sahel (UNISS).

"The United Nations must more than ever play a leadership role in international advocacy work for the benefit of the G5 Sahel. The multifaceted crisis in our regional space is becoming more complex, intensifying and even extending more and more beyond the Sahel. Also, it seems essential to us to increase international mobilization and accelerate relevant actions on the ground, in synergy with appropriate stakeholders. This is the essence of the modus operandi at the heart of our partnership and which we must, and will have to perfect," declared Maman Sambo SIDIKOU, Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel.

"On behalf of the United Nations, I intend to strengthen our political advocacy, at the

highest level of the involved States, and, in particular, to support the implementation of initiatives for decentralization, stabilization and improvement of governance" declared the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF.

"We need to invest in human capital in the Sahel. The region can no longer continue to deprive itself of half of its potential. Women and girls must have access to the opportunities and tools for their empowerment and success. Another Sahel is possible, but it will not happen without its youth. Let us invest in Sahelian youth for development and sustainable peace" declared Mr. Abdoulaye Mar DIEYE, United Nations Special Coordinator for Sahel Development.

"I would like to urge us to take advantage of this consultation framework to raise options for a paradigm shift in our respective interventions and our common approaches for more effectiveness and efficiency for the benefit of populations, particularly in fragile areas" declared Dr. Issa DOUBRAGNE, President of the Council of Ministers of the G5 Sahel.

The meeting participants formulated recommendations for the optimization of the implementation of joint projects, in particular through the commitment of the two entities to promote a change of narrative on the Sahel in order to better enhance the wealth and opportunities of the region, and strengthen political advocacy to address the root causes of crises.

Curbing Climate change and Preventing Conflict

In response to the Security Council's request to undertake risk assessments in the sub region to examine the "adverse implications of climate change" and to assist governments and the UN system to address these challenges, UNOWAS, in coordination with the West and Central Africa Office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Regional Collaboration Centre of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), launched on June 10th a UN Regional Working Group on Climate Change, Environment, Security and Development in West Africa (UN-CCESD).

Climate Change spares no region of the world. In West Africa, the situation is especially alarming. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, 60 to 70 percent of the population depends on rain-fed agriculture and livestock, resource competition is increasing, many people are forced to migrate, sea-level rise is threatening coastal areas. All of this impacts the ability of communities to live peacefully together. People residing in conflict areas are most affected. Climate change becomes a risk multiplier in these situations, intensifying existing vulnerabilities.

There is enormous local resilience to cope with climate change and its negative impacts. National governments and regional bodies are increasingly stepping up to the challenge. Yet much more is needed to connect the dots and promote the twin goal of curbing climate change and preventing conflict.

UN complementarity and regional cooperation with ECOWAS

To support these efforts, UNOWAS, together with the West and Central Africa Office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Regional Collaboration Centre of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched a UN Regional Working Group on Climate Change, Environment, Security and Development in West Africa (UN-CCESD).

The UN Regional Working Group is a coordination platform open to all UN partners to unite efforts, combine knowledge and expertise of its members to promote an integrated approach on climate change and regional cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). "this is a great opportunity to join hands and promote an integrated and harmonized approach to our work with ECOWAS on climate change-related issues," declared the UNOWAS Deputy Special Representative, Giovanie Biha, at the launch of the Working Group.

Each UN entity has its own entry point in this regard and have a vital role to play. UNOWAS' mandate on climate change is focused on conflict prevention as per the Security Council's request

To date, UNOWAS has carried out five climate security risk assessments together with UN partners, government agencies and civil society in Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger and Senegal. UNOWAS is also working with ECOWAS to ensure that linkages between climate change and security considerations are better understood among member states and key stakeholders in the ECOWAS region, and that the security issues identified in the risk assessments are integrated in countries' adaptation plans. UNOWAS' added value can be seen in this light: to assist in connecting local knowledge and concerns with national and regional policy development - and to ensure a conflict sensitive lens throughout.

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UNODC and its partners fight organized crime, drugs, terrorism and corruption in West Africa and the Sahel

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works with governments, international organizations, other United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, and civil societies to develop and implement programs that meet countries' needs and increase security of people in the region.



Organized crime, drugs, terrorism and corruption are priority issues for the United Nations. Since these borderless problems are increasingly seen as threats to individuals and states, the need for coordinated initiatives at national, regional and transnational levels is growing.

West Africa is affected by a wide range of factors making it particularly vulnerable to specific security challenges related to transnational organized crime, terrorism and corruption. The region has become an epicenter for illegal activities associated with drugs, firearms, natural resources and human trafficking, but most importantly the center for sub-regional conflicts which have significantly increased threats of terrorism.

UNODC plays an important role in a region considered to be the epicenter of multiple trafficking

UNODC with its Regional Office for West and Central Africa, has designed a crosscutting and multilateral strategy where peacebuilding, security sector reform, national institution building, and capacity building efforts are implemented in the most effective manner with a view to contribute to the creation of an environment prone to socioeconomic development to the benefit of people in West Africa. To implement this strategy, UNODC ROSEN has established a Regional programme for West Africa.

The RP adopts a comprehensive approach in its implementation, combining both UNODC global programs (for instance the Global Program against Corruption), regional (such as the Sahel Program) and national (for example the Anti-organized crime and counter narcotics enforcement in Cape Verde Project (ANTRAF), which are complementary.

The RP has so far achieved excellent results in West Africa. Between 2016 and 2018, UNODC ROSEN implemented 924 activities reaching 26,348 beneficiaries in 16 countries. These results showcase strong ownership of the security challenges facing governments. For instance, Niger provided legal aid to 823 detainees in the context of fighting terrorism, of which 270 persons were released, 133 were convicted and 242 procedures were settled.

In addition, the office's support to countries in the region fully integrates the UNODC Strategy 2021-2025 to contribute to global peace and security, human rights and development, leaving no one behind and facing the problems of fragility, crime and terrorism exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The regional office's work also builds on UNODC's Strategic Vision for Africa 2030 seeking to strengthen crime prevention, enhance justice, address organized crime, ensure a balanced response to drugs, improve the rule of law and bolster resilience through analytic, normative and technical cooperation.



West Africa: a trafficking hub

UNOWAS alongside UNODC for a safer and more stable Sahel

With around 70 million inhabitants, two-thirds of whom are under 25, the Sahel is one of the poorest regions in the world. Flows of drugs, migrants, firearms and movements of terrorist groups are growing along historically dedicated trade and migration routes, at the expense of security, good governance and development.

As part of its commitment to the region and its priorities for West and Central Africa, UNODC contributes to the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) through its Sahel Program, by ensuring coordination with several United Nations agencies, including UNOWAS and other partners.

As such, UNODC organized on 1st and 2nd July 2021, the 5th meeting of the Sahel Program Steering Committee. This meeting enabled UNODC and its partners to discuss the strategic direction of the Sahel Program in order to take stock of the implementation strategy to adapt it, if necessary, to today's realities.

The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, Giovannie BIHA, took part in this important meeting which saw the participation of representatives of the Governments of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Chad as well as the G5 Sahel and other partners.

"UNOWAS is also committed through the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and works closely with UNODC, in particular, to increase awareness among national authorities of the need to strengthen the rule of law and judicial capacities, and respect for human rights, especially in the fight against terrorism. The work done by UNODC under its Sahel program and beyond is remarkable. It has made it possible, in coordination with the various governments and partners, to achieve decisive progress. But we must remain vigilant and redouble our efforts and mobilization in order to curb this challenge," Ms. BIHA said in her speech.

The 5th meeting of the UNODC Sahel program steering committee is in line with the vision of the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, which places conflict and crisis prevention and mobilization for the implementation of the UNODC Program. sustainable development by 2030 as the priorities of its action.

We must therefore, together "meet the challenges posed by crime, corruption and terrorism, and achieve the objectives of the United Nations in order to strengthen prevention and promote peace and security, human rights and sustainable development," concluded Ms. BIHA.

Youth, major players in Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention in West Africa and the Sahel

Always committed to promoting the participation of young women and men in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and decision-making processes, UNOWAS has been very active recently by contributing to the organization of several important forums that have brought together hundreds of young women and men in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger and Togo. Objective: to take stock and raise awareness among national authorities and various actors on the need to strengthen the participation of young people, especially in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes.



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In Niger, young people are involved for a better conflict prevention during electoral periods

In Niger, the National Youth Council (CNJ-Niger) kicked off, on 11 January 2021, its activities with an awareness and advocacy campaign for the prevention of electoral violence which has involved around 300 young volunteers across the country. Additionally, short video messages for elections without violence were recorded in French and in the main local languages and disseminated via social networks. Young people were also consulted through a series of workshops to analyze conflict situations and identify recommended actions for a more effective conflict prevention during electoral periods in eight (8) regions of the country. Tea-debates on the role and responsibility of young people for peaceful elections were organized.



young people play a decisive role in the organization of peaceful elections in Côte d'Ivoire

In Côte d'Ivoire, young people mobilized from 2 to 3 March 2021 in Abidjan, under the lead of the West African Network of Young Women Leaders of Côte d'Ivoire (ROAJELF-Cl.) for a consultation workshop for peaceful and violence-free legislative elections and the consolidation of peace in Côte d'Ivoire. This workshop, which brought together young people from civil society organizations, political parties, unions, religious and community associations, took place in a context where Côte d'Ivoire was engaged in an electoral process studded with tensions that could undermine stability and deteriorate the social environment for the legislative elections of 6 March 2021.



Discussions mainly focused on necessary measures to be put in place to allow young people play a decisive role in the organization of peaceful and violence-free elections and in strengthening social cohesion and peace. Thus, through the adoption of a manifesto, the participants decided, inter alia, to increase the awareness of young people to peaceful elections before, during and after the poll, to refuse to be actors of violence and relays of violence and disinformation on social networks. They also expressed their intention to strengthen their collaboration with Defense and Security Forces, to position themselves as breeding grounds for social cohesion and to create a framework for permanent intergenerational political dialogue. A digital campaign was also launched with key messages in different languages for smooth elections.



Young Beninese committed to ensuring citizen watch for lasting peace

In Benin, a workshop gathered, from 16 to 18 March, young web activists, members of youth organizations, members of peace clubs and members of the women, youth, peace and security working group in West Africa and in the Sahel (GTFJPS-AOS) for a peaceful and violence-free presidential election. The workshop organized by ROAJELF-Benin aimed at strengthening their capacities and contributing to violence-free elections as well as peacebuilding. During this workshop, discussions focused on the electoral issue in Benin and on adequate solutions to help protect the country from a deep socio-political crisis and security threats linked to violent extremism and terrorism. The young people adopted a manifesto expressing their commitment to ensuring citizen watch, to show kindness, to report violence, to use social networks effectively with responsibility and to encourage social cohesion. A vast



digital awareness campaign called "Youth United for Peace" was also launched.

Peace clubs revitalized in Guinea and installed in several localities in Togo

Togo is one of the very first countries to benefit from the implementation of the Peace clubs project aiming at involving young women and men in conflict prevention, peace and decision-making processes in West Africa and the Sahel. On 5 March 2021, in Lomé, in the presence of government representatives, technical and financial partners, the National Youth Council of Togo (CNJ-Togo), responsible for the implementation of the said project in Togo, launched the second phase through a national workshop for the appropriation of the peace clubs project. The workshop allowed to strengthen capacities of clubs members on management and implementation tools of the project with the objective to positively impact on populations for stability and lasting peace in the communities. It was also an opportunity for the to take stock of the conflicts and their triggers and to learn about the various activities to put in place to help prevent or resolve conflicts in their respective communities. Similar workshops, especially on the promotion of peace, the fight against smuggling and the use of narcotics, and peaceful resolution of conflicts between herders and farmers, were also organized in the prefectures of Kéran, Haho, d'Agou, Yoto, Anié, Dany and Tchamba.



In Guinea, the Guinean section of the Women, Youth, Peace and Security Working Group of West Africa and the Sahel (GTFJPS-AOS / Guinea) organized from May 26 to 28, 2021, a revitalization and development workshop on the appropriation of peace clubs for the prevention and management of conflicts and the consolidation of peace in Guinea. Organized for young women and men from peace clubs, GTFJPS-AOS / Guinea, state institutions and civil society organizations, the workshop was an opportunity for young people to discuss the issue of conflicts, means and actions to be undertaken and to formulate proposals for an effective mobilization of young people and women in favor of conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace. In this regard, they expressed their intention to strengthen collaboration with Defense and Security Forces, to promote peace clubs in their localities and to position themselves as defenders for social cohesion by creating a national coordination of actors of Peace for more efficiency. In addition, the workshop served as a framework for the launch of the second phase of the project involving youth in conflict prevention, peace and decision-making processes in West Africa and the Sahel, which gives the latitude to the various peace clubs to start the implementation of their activities.



Young people of Ghana and Burkina Faso equipped in conflict prevention

In Ghana, With the support of UNOWAS, ROAJEF-Ghana organized two training workshops for young people on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. A total of 50 young women and men, benefited from these training sessions with the purpose to strengthen their capacities in conflict analysis and prevention and to give them the means to participate in peace processes. "My perception of peace and security and gender-based violence has changed in a positive way," said one of the participants and another said: "It was an eye-opener, now I am ready to be an advocate for peace".



In Burkina Faso, on the initiative of ROAJELF-Burkina, around fifty young women and men from youth and women's organizations, political parties and state institutions participated in a workshop on conflict prevention and management, peabuilding. The workshop was also a framework for concerted planning of youth action in favor of lasting peace in Burkina Faso. To this end, young people are committed to contribute to the promotion of dialogue and social justice, civility, non-violent communication and traditional techniques of conflict resolution and peace promotion for a strong and stable Burkina Faso. Following this meeting ROAJELF-Burkina, with the support of UNOWAS, will proceed with the installation of peace clubs for young women and men in ten (10) localities of the country for a further contribution of young people in conflict prevention, the fight against insecurity and the consolidation of peace at the community level.

Beyond these activities, UNOWAS, in coordination with its regional and international partners, intends to continue its commitment towards the effective and continuous participation of young people in the consolidation of peace and the prevention of conflicts. Other similar activities are planned for the second semester of 2021. UNOWAS welcomes the willingness of States to support this process and invites all stakeholders, in particular, youth organizations, civil society organizations and Technical and Financial partners , to a greater involvement for the effective implementation of the youth, peace and security program in West Africa and the Sahel.

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