



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



**Security Council briefing on
Peace consolidation in West Africa (UNOWAS)**

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Greece's Statement delivered
by Mr. Ioannis Stamatekos,

Chargé d' Affaires of the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting.

I would like to thank SRSG Leonardo Santos Simão for his briefing and express my country's full support to the work of UNOWAS. I would equally like to thank UN Women Executive Director, Ms. Sima Bahous, and the Executive Director of the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Ms. Levinia Addae-Mensah, for their valuable insights, especially into the situation of women's & girls' rights in the region. Allow me also to join others in expressing condolences to the government and people of Ghana for the tragic loss of life in the helicopter crash.

Mr. President, I would like to make three points:

First, on security and regional cooperation.

The security situation in the Sahel remains deeply concerning. According to the latest SG report, terrorist activities continue to destabilize the central Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin. Namely, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger remain under sustained attacks by JNIM and the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP). In this context, Niger's recent withdrawal from the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has further strained regional capacities to respond effectively to these threats. Violent extremist groups continue to destabilize vast areas, threatening not only land borders but also vital maritime routes in the Gulf of Guinea by expanded activities in coastal states like Northern Benin, Togo, and along the Mali-Senegal-Mauritania border area.

We note that piracy incidents in the Gulf have fallen significantly largely due to regional cooperation frameworks such as the Yaoundé Architecture and enhanced naval

coordination. Greece, as a leading maritime nation, reaffirms its support for further cooperation to strengthen coastal security capacities. Nevertheless, the threat is evolving: criminal and extremist networks are increasingly diversifying into trafficking & smuggling, with the potential to exploit maritime routes to finance their operations.

In this context, we are closely following the changing relationship between the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and ECOWAS. Continued dialogue and engagement is essential to prevent further fragmentation and ensure counter-terrorism and peacebuilding/stabilization initiatives remain mutually reinforcing and grounded in regional ownership. In this respect, we welcome efforts aiming to strengthen the Accra Initiative, the recent AU-ECOWAS decision to establish a Joint Threat Fusion & Analysis Cell, as well as the much-needed activation of the AU & ECOWAS Standby Forces.

Second, on governance and political transitions.

The succession of unconstitutional changes of government has undermined democratic norms and complicated stabilization efforts.

Upcoming polls in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea & Guinea-Bissau in 2025 and Benin in early 2026 will be crucial tests for institutional resilience and public trust. At the same time, we caution transitional authorities that failure to set clear electoral timelines and end dates for transition undermines national cohesion and regional stability. It is essential that these processes are inclusive, transparent, and peaceful, respecting agreed timetables. Credible elections, underpinned by civic participation and respect for fundamental freedoms, remain indispensable for long term stability. In this regard, Greece welcomes UNOWAS's electoral assistance and mediation efforts and encourages close coordination with ECOWAS and the African Union.

Third, on human rights, climate resilience, and peacebuilding.

Human rights must remain central to all international and regional responses. While progress has been made in enhancing the participation of women and youth in decision-making in Côte d'Ivoire & Niger, significant challenges persist. Today, 28.7 million people across the Sahel require urgent humanitarian assistance and protection, with women and girls, who comprise more than half of this population, facing heightened risks of displacement, forced marriage, and sexual and gender-based violence. Their meaningful participation in peace processes and governance is both a moral imperative and a proven catalyst for durable peace.

The region's challenges are further compounded climate change. The Sahel is warming 1.5 times faster than the global average, with prolonged droughts and irregular rainfall intensifying competition over scarce resources and driving displacement. These conditions create fertile ground for extremist exploitation and deepen gendered

vulnerabilities. Addressing these interconnected threats demands holistic strategies that integrate human rights protection, gender equality, climate adaptation, and inclusive peacebuilding to foster social cohesion and resilience.

Mr. President,

The challenges facing West Africa and the Sahel are multidimensional and demand sustained multilateral engagement. Greece reaffirms its commitment to supporting regional and international initiatives that promote peace, security, and sustainable development. We also extend our congratulations to ECOWAS on its 50th anniversary, a testament to enduring regional cooperation. Greece stands ready to contribute to collective efforts to secure a stable and prosperous future for the peoples of this vital region.

I thank you