

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 23 June 2020 from the representatives of the Dominican Republic, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Germany and the Dominican Republic, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council, and the United Kingdom, which worked in close cooperation with them, would like to share the summary of the meeting on the situation in Mali held by the Group on 27 May 2020 (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) José **Singer Weisinger**
Ambassador

Special Envoy of the Dominican Republic to the Security Council

(Signed) Christoph **Heusgen**
Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

(Signed) Jonathan **Allen**
Chargé d'affaires of the United Kingdom to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 23 June 2020 from the representatives of the Dominican Republic, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Summary of the meeting on the situation in Mali, held by the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security on 27 May 2020

On 27 May 2020, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Mali. The members received a briefing by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Members of the Security Council asked questions about the implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security of Mali, the efforts made by MINUSMA to increase the representation of women in government, the mechanisms set up to implement the peace agreement and opportunities for strengthening women's access to justice. Expressing concern about the rising number of cases of sexual and gender-based violence in Mali, Council members enquired about women's access to services, the role of faith-based actors and the implementation of the joint communiqué between the Government of Mali and the United Nations on prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. Other questions focused on the available expertise on gender issues in MINUSMA and suggestions for measurable benchmarks related to women and peace and security to be included in the new mandate of the mission.

Below are the main points raised by participants:

- Progress has been made on female representation in parliament following the legislative elections in March 2020. Women candidates gained 41 of 147 seats, leading to an increase of women's representation in the National Assembly from 9.45 per cent to 27.89 per cent. By contrast, female representation in public offices remains weak: women's representation in government decreased from 34 per cent to 23 per cent and stands at only 5.3 per cent in the prefectural corps and at 5 per cent in the interim authorities. Furthermore, social practices and religious norms prevent women from participating in the reconciliation process in Mali, where they represent only 12 per cent in the regional and municipal reconciliation committees.
- In January 2020, the Government of Mali, in cooperation with MINUSMA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), held a high-level workshop on the inclusion of women in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. More than 200 women leaders attended the meeting alongside representatives of the signatory parties. Participants recommended increasing the percentage of women in the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreement from the current 3 per cent to 30 per cent, as well as in political decision-making bodies, in line with Act No. 2015-052. They also agreed to create an independent women's observatory to monitor progress in the implementation of the peace agreement and to establish a monitoring framework to follow up on the outcomes of the workshop. The monitoring framework, established in April 2020, comprises the ministries of territorial administration, women affairs and peace, national reconciliation and social cohesion, the High Representative of the President of the Republic for the implementation of the peace agreement and nine women leaders. Furthermore, and in line with the recommendation made

at the high-level workshop, during the thirty-ninth session of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, each signatory party agreed to include two additional women representatives in order to increase the number of women on the Committee to six.

- Various forms of sexual and gender-based violence continue to affect women and girls in Mali, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy and trafficking, perpetrated by armed groups, extremist elements and in some cases also members of the national security and defence forces. Violence against women is exacerbated by entrenched gender-based inequality and harmful social norms, as well as militarization and the proliferation of arms. Data on sexual violence is only indicative as cases of sexual violence remain largely underreported owing to a lack of service coverage and fear of reprisals and social rejection. In 2019, a total of 4,617 survivors of gender-based violence were reported, of whom 97 per cent were women and 51 per cent were girls under the age of 18 years. In 2019, MINUSMA was able to verify 27 cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed by non-State armed groups and members of the national security forces. In the first quarter of 2020, a total of 715 cases of gender-based violence have been reported. MINUSMA has verified eight cases of conflict-related sexual violence in that period. Sixty per cent of locations in the country do not have any form of services for survivors of sexual violence. MINUSMA is collaborating with United Nations agencies to provide services for survivors outside the localities covered by its mandate. The imposition of quarantine and lockdown measures owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has restricted the mobility of humanitarian actors and further impeded access to services for survivors, making it harder to monitor and report violations of international norms.
- MINUSMA and other United Nations entities continue to promote access to justice for women and girls, including through informative sessions on sexual and gender-based violence with judicial authorities and civil society, as well as training courses on legal and judicial support for jurists and paralegals. United Nations partners have also supported the creation of one-stop centres in Bamako, Mopti and Gao, and additional centres are planned to be opened in Segou and Kangaba. Despite those efforts and a significant increase in reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2019, not a single investigation of such crimes has been brought to trial in Mali. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict has supported the national authorities in Mali to help to prioritize cases of conflict-related sexual violence and to build their national capacities. However, planned engagements with the Ministry of Justice had to be suspended in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The fight against impunity is at the heart of the joint communiqué between the Government of Mali and the United Nations on prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence, signed in March 2019. A presidential declaration of 8 March 2020 further reinforced the political commitments behind the joint communiqué and the resulting action plan, and the President has agreed to designate a focal point to follow up on the joint communiqué. Two non-State armed groups have issued unilateral communiqués to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. In addition to formal legal and policy frameworks, engaging the moral authority of traditional and religious leaders is key to eliminating stigma and shifting harmful social norms. Following a workshop hosted by MINUSMA with 113 Islamic religious leaders, the President of the High Islamic Council signed a declaration in which he committed to issuing a fatwa denouncing conflict-related sexual violence.

- The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family validated the third national action plan on women and peace and security covering the period 2019–2023 but the Government of Mali has yet to formally adopt it.
- The MINUSMA Gender Unit has been strengthened. It is headed by a newly recruited P-5 staff member and now consists of nine staff members, including one international Gender Officer based in Mopti.

The following recommendations were made by UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict:

- In upcoming Security Council negotiations to renew the mandate of MINUSMA, all gender-relevant language from Security Council resolution [2480 \(2019\)](#) should be retained. Since the high-level workshop on paragraph 4 has already taken place and its monitoring framework is already operational, emphasis should be placed on the implementation of the recommendations contained therein, for example by explicitly calling for progress updates in the periodic reporting to the Council.
- The Co-Chairs or other Council members could consider a technical-level event with representatives from Malian civil society and other international security actors in Mali (the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, selected States members of the European Union and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel) on their integration of women and peace and security considerations into their interventions.
- The Co-Chairs should ask the Panel of Experts on Mali to explain the challenges that they have faced in verifying cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including the trafficking of women and girls, or to provide more detailed information in that regard, and to request recommendations for listings of individuals.
- Council members should enhance their advocacy with the authorities of Mali towards the prioritization of a judicial response to conflict-related sexual violence and the adoption of a law against gender-based violence.

In closing the meeting, the Co-Chairs thanked the briefers for their participation and committed themselves to following up on the important issues raised.
