

PBC meeting on climate-related peace and development challenges in the Sahel
22 March 2022
Chair's Summary

1. On 22 March, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held a virtual Ambassadorial-level meeting on climate-related peace and development challenges in the Sahel Region, convened by H.E. Mr. José A. Blanco Conde, Vice-Chair of the PBC and Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic. The objective of the meeting was to support the countries of the region, and the G5 Sahel countries in particular, in their efforts to address climate degradation issues from a peacebuilding and sustainable development perspective, within the framework of the implementation of UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) and its Support Plan. In his opening remarks, the Vice Chair recalled how the last PBC meeting in 2021 highlighted the need for more coordinated action to address the multidimensional challenges facing the region. He proffered that this meeting presents an opportunity to bolster support for climate related initiatives within the framework of UNISS and its Support Plan.

2. The Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Eric Tiare, stated that the topic of the meeting is one of the priorities of the G5 Sahel Strategy for Development and Security (SDS) and its Priority Investment Program (PIP 2022-2024), which is aligned with the UNISS Support Plan. He described ongoing activities that aim to improve economic opportunities and livelihoods of rural producers under the Joint Program (SD3C), an initiative of the G5 Sahel in response to the challenges of COVID-19, conflict, and climate change in partnership with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the World Food Programme (WFP). The initiative contributes to the resilience pillar of UNISS. He expressed concern about the deteriorating humanitarian crisis, security, and development challenges in the Sahel, noting that climate change challenges and terrorism are contributing significantly to internal displacement. He thanked partners for ongoing efforts to scale up coordinated action, noting in particular support provided by the AfDB for youth empowerment and COVID mitigation initiatives. He called for the mobilization of additional resources for projects in support of G5 Sahel initiatives.

3. The UN Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, expressed concern about the shrinking of democratic and political spaces due to recent military transitions and the possible disastrous humanitarian consequences of ECOWAS sanctions on Mali. He noted that the current war in Ukraine and the resulting rise in food prices would have a strong impact on Sahelian countries and could create a crowding-out effect on humanitarian funding. To address these multidimensional challenges, he stressed the need to preserve the political unity of the G5 Sahel through greater alignment of collective support for the Priority Investment Program, noting the importance of including political and security parameters such as the Nouakchott process and the Accra initiative. Mr. Mar Dieye also called for increased

structural funding to address the low level of investment in Sahelian countries, citing as examples the need to support the AU's Great Green Wall and the AfDB's Desert-to-Power initiatives. He called on partners to help scale up UNISS initiatives, stressing the essential role of the PBF for targeted investments that promote cross-border cooperation with a focus on women and youth empowerment.

4. The Director General of IOM, Mr. António Vitorino and the Director General of FAO, Mr. Qu Dongyu, presented results and lessons learned from the joint IOM/FAO initiative on transhumance and conflict prevention, which has been successfully implemented in the region, in part with PBF support. Contributing to the resilience pillar of UNISS, the goals of the IOM/FAO initiative are to support governments and communities in the region to adapt and prevent forced displacements resulting from the adverse effect of climate change and to improve transhumance dispute resolution and governance systems. In his briefing, Mr. António Vitorino highlighted the value of the Transhumance Tracking Tool (TTT) as an early response mechanism and a platform for dialogue among local stakeholders. In January 2022 alone, the TTT launched 3055 conflict alerts and 665 warnings on the arrival of herds that could have sparked conflicts. Mr. Vitorino stressed how this initiative underlined the need to listen to communities' perceptions and build on what they have learned to adapt to these new living conditions. The Director General of FAO, Mr. Qu Dongyu, added that the joint initiative included natural resource mapping at the local level, infrastructure investments and conflict management mechanisms, and food security interventions. He reiterated the need to strengthen partnerships with local, national and regional authorities to improve the effectiveness of transhumance regulations and policies regarding the governance of pastoral and agropastoral areas. Mr. Qu Dongyu stressed the importance of ensuring greater access to basic services for these communities, including health, education and financing.

5. The Acting Director of the Climate Change and Green Growth Department of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Mr. Al Hamndou Dorsouma, highlighted the critical role of the AfDB in support of socio-economic development while helping countries build climate resilience and transition to a greener future. He referenced the Third Strategy for Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa (2022-2026), which the Bank's Board of Directors recently approved. The AfDB has invested about US\$12.3 billion in climate finance between 2016 and 2020 in Africa, with a focus on the most vulnerable regions such as the Sahel. The Acting Director cited the \$25 billion African Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP) and the AU Great Green Wall initiative - the largest sustainable development programs in the Sahel - as examples of transformative climate change initiatives in the Sahel that the Bank is supporting. The Bank has committed US\$6.5 billion to these initiatives through a wide range of programs in agriculture, infrastructure and water. Further, the \$20 billion Desert to Power ("DtP") initiative aims to create the world's largest solar energy zone in the region. Mr. Al Hamndou Dorsouma also noted the added value of the flexible Transition Support Facility

(TSF), where donor resources can be pooled for greater impact, and voiced support for the Sahel Climate Investment Plan, which aims to boost the region's climate action ambition following the decision of African Heads of State at COP 22 in 2016 in Marrakech to create the Sahel Climate Commission.

6. Mr. Alioune Gueye, from the Mali-based NGO Renajem, stressed that climate change represents a major challenge for the future of young people in the Sahel region. He praised the UNISS and the G5 Sahel Integrated Youth Strategy (SIJ) for placing youth empowerment at the heart of their work and called on partners to step up their investments in education and youth employment, geared towards green jobs and the digital economy. Mr. Alioune Gueye also emphasized the need to strengthen youth involvement through both a common and Sahel-specific approach to climate issues to best prepare for the upcoming COP27 in Egypt. As an example of climate-related positive change for Sahelian youth, he cited the AU's Great Green Wall initiative, stressing the importance of involving more women in the implementation of this initiative given their key role as actors of change. Finally, he emphasized the importance of working with youth organizations in the pursuit of peace and security objectives in the Sahel region and for the implementation of Agenda 2030.
7. Ms. Fatchima Nayaya, from the Niger-based NGO Waraka, deplored the deterioration of the security situation in Niger, the Lake Chad Basin and the Liptako Gourma. She explained that the increase in violence in these areas is linked to the scarcity of natural resources due to climate change and conflicts related to their access. She stressed the need to invest in the modernization of agriculture, livestock and the use of natural resources by involving more youth and women to stabilize areas and communities. The NGO Waraka aims to help mitigate these challenges with better community involvement of youth and women. NGO Waraka's interventions include good governance and conflict management, strengthened innovation in agriculture and livestock for better use of natural resources. She also stated that funding women and youth initiatives is critical for sustainable development.
8. The European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, Ms. Emanuela Claudia Del Re, highlighted the direct impact of climate change on refugee and food crises, noting the risk of further exacerbation as a result of the impact of the war in Ukraine on the global food market. She described interventions implemented within the framework of the EU strategy for the Sahel and stressed the paramount need to strengthen governance to address the root causes of the Sahel crisis. She highlighted the FREXUS project, which aims to strengthen effective governance mechanisms for access to natural resources in targeted communities, and the EU's continued support to the AU's Great Green Wall initiative. Ms. Del Re highlighted the added value of the PBF, of which the EU and its Member States are among the largest donors (more than 60%), as well as the continued efforts of UN country teams to integrate climate change risk analysis into their development cooperation frameworks. She called for stronger

coordinated action between the EU, the UN and the AU, for better financing of climate change initiatives, and the need to focus on diasporas, women and youth.

9. The Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, H.E. Fatima Kyari Mohammed emphasized the importance of mitigating climate-related security risks by investing more in prevention through preparedness, analysis, and early warning mechanisms. She highlighted the need to better integrate environmental variables in joint programming and called for better coordination among local, regional and international actors for effective action and policy responses to climate change. She referred to multilateral efforts to address climate-related peace challenges in the region, such as the meeting of the African Heads of State Committee on Climate Change held on 6 February 2022 in Addis Ababa to reaffirm the importance of restoring the balance between mitigation, adaptation, and financing needs related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement. Ms. Kyari Mohammed also mentioned the joint strategic assessment planning meeting between the AU, UN, ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel on governance and security, held in New York in March 2022 to address salient issues in the Sahel.
10. The members of the Commission welcomed the briefings and made the following observations:
 - They recognized the extreme vulnerability of the Sahel to the effects of climate change, which adds to the complexity of the humanitarian, security, political and development challenges in the region.
 - They underscored the need for effective mechanisms governing access to natural resources across the region, calling on partners to adopt a common and holistic climate-sensitive approach to addressing the root causes of human insecurity in the Sahel.
 - They noted the importance of reinforcing institutions and accountability of governance mechanisms to ensure access to basic services and build resilient communities while protecting human rights.
 - Member States recognized the importance of supporting climate-related efforts at the community level and called for partnerships with civil society in support of climate change mitigation and adaptation. They called for increased funding for women and youth-led initiatives to address climate-related security risks, including specific support to women and youth climate activists and environmental peacebuilders in most fragile and conflict affected areas.
 - They commended the contributions to the Great Green Wall and Desert-to-power initiatives supported by the AfDB and the World Bank and called for more structural investments in response to climate change.

- They welcomed efforts to ensure climate-sensitive programming under the framework of UNISS and its Support Plan and encouraged further integration of climate change risk analysis into sustainable development cooperation frameworks. They also welcomed the completion of regional climate security risk assessments by UNOCA and UNOWAS with ECCAS and ECOWAS. They recognized the PBF as a useful tool for testing climate-related approaches by placing prevention at the center of the humanitarian, peace and development nexus in cross-border areas.
11. The floor was then given to the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, Ms. Giovanie Biha, who in response to questions from the floor, highlighted efforts made to enhance integrated approaches to peace, development, and human rights within the framework of UNISS. Ms. Biha described support provided by the UN Climate Security Mechanism and the UN Regional Working Group on Climate Change, Environment, Security and Development in West Africa to ECOWAS and national governments for addressing climate related challenges. She recommended strengthening gender considerations in terms of programmatic support and funding, and called for increased resources to support women and youth climate activists and environmental peacebuilders in contexts of conflict and fragility.