



Joint Meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Peacebuilding Commission

The Impact of Cross-border Transhumance on Sustainable Peace and Development in West Africa and the Sahel

Tuesday, 3 December 2019

Informal Summary

The President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), H.E. Ms. Mona Juul, and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), H.E. Mr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto, co-chaired a joint meeting of ECOSOC and PBC on “The Impact of Cross-border Transhumance on Sustainable Peace and Development in West Africa and the Sahel”. Member States from both intergovernmental bodies, UN entities, including from the Sahel region, as well as representatives from civil society attended the joint meeting. This event built on previous joint ECOSOC-PBC meetings on the 2030 Agenda (2016), the situation in the Sahel (2017), and the linkages between climate change and challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel (2018), as well as on relevant Security Council meetings. The meeting raised awareness of the complex challenges related to transhumance in countries and cross-border areas of West Africa and the Sahel; showcased successful practical approaches and actions to address transhumance-related challenges to provide lessons learned for ongoing work in the affected sub-regions of Africa; and encouraged further action-orientated, integrated and sustainable solutions to address further gaps and challenges, as well as accelerate implementation for impact on the ground. The joint meeting provided a number of recommendations to successfully address transhumance-related challenges.

The challenges related to transhumance for peacebuilding and sustainable development

In her opening remarks, the ECOSOC President¹ outlined concerns over increasing conflicts between pastoralists/herders and farmers in West Africa and the Sahel, noting the significance of pastoralism for economies in the region. She highlighted the need for an integrated and coherent response to multi-dimensional challenges, including socio-economic and environmental challenges. She noted

¹ The ECOSOC President’s remarks are available at:

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/president/2020/opening-statement-ecosoc-president-3-december-2019.pdf> and

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/president/2020/closing-statement-ecosoc-president-3-december-2019.pdf>

that implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 1 (poverty eradication), 2 (zero hunger), 15 (life on land), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (partnerships) could provide a good entry point for addressing the long-term drivers of pastoralist-farmer conflicts. The President emphasised the value of the ECOSOC and the PBC working together to address peacebuilding and development, and providing guidance to the UN system within their respective mandates, noting a draft ECOSOC resolution also under discussion on support to the Sahel region aiming to help address the development challenges and root causes of regional instability. The PBC Chair² reaffirmed the commitment of the ECOSOC and the PBC to accompany the region in its efforts to ensure peacebuilding and development.

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Ms. Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, raised concern over the increase in farmer-herder conflicts across the region, with more deaths attributed in 2018 compared with those from Boko Haram. While conflicts were not new, their frequency and deadly nature was a new trend, driven by the proliferation of small arms, the breakdown of local dispute resolution mechanisms, and the continued widespread impunity of farmer-herder conflicts. Moreover, multiple context-specific factors intensified farmer-herder conflicts: lack of resource governance, political manipulation, economic interests, the instrumentalization of ethnic-religious tensions, and population growth. These points were reiterated by several member States, particularly those from the Sahel region who stressed that transhumance remained a vital source of livelihoods for many people and had always been beneficial to both farmers and pastoralists. The DSRSG outlined the response from the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWAS), working with the whole UN family, particularly FAO, WFP, UNOCA as well as IOM, in partnership with ECOWAS, the World Bank, civil society, donors and others, to address farmer-herder challenges from a conflict prevention perspective. For example, a UN Working Group had been established to coordinate implementation of recommendations from the 2018 ECOWAS-UNOWAS joint study to address farmer-herder's challenges in the region. Since an integrated and coherent UN approach was required, the role of UNOWAS was to provide strategic direction, regional analysis, coordination and awareness.

Member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Ms. Mariam Wallet Med Aboubakrine, recalled the Forum's report on its Fifteenth Session (2016), which drew attention to conflicts faced by indigenous people and provided various avenues to address transhumance-related conflict. Using a country example, she described how climate change and diminishing natural resources, the proliferation of weapons and criminal groups, population growth and historic administrative legacies were key factors. This had led to economic upheaval and the disruption to cultural ways of life. It was crucial to involve indigenous peoples in peacebuilding solutions and local development initiatives, especially youth who were vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, and women as victims of violence.

² The PBC Chair's remarks are available at:
<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2019doc/pbc-chair-remarks-joint-ecosoc-meeting.pdf>

Strengthening responses to transhumance-related challenges

Mr. Jon Mitchell from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) introduced recent research from ODI on strengthening the response to transhumance-related challenges in the region. He first emphasised the importance of regional integration - ensuring cross-border trade, market access and mobility of livestock to mitigate environmental or security impact in any one country affecting others; transboundary animal disease control and antibiotic resistance; and cyber crime cooperation. Secondly, taking a more risk-informed approach to development and building resilience, including to the effects of climate change. Mr Mitchell made five specific recommendations: 1) increase the capacity of national and regional early warning systems, including critical indicators on disease, education and public health; 2) create public-private partnerships to generate insurance and financial products; 3) review regional transhumance regulatory frameworks in the light of current conflicts; 4) strengthen the value chain on livestock production and marketing; and 5) increase resources for mitigation of the impact of climate.

Member States expressed concern about the deteriorating security situation in some parts of West Africa and the Sahel, and welcomed the preventive and mitigating actions taken so far by governments in the region, ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and other partners on the ground. They reiterated the importance of integrated approaches to stem violence and address the long-term drivers of conflicts. Many noted the valuable role of the Peacebuilding Fund, as well as cross-agency programmes.

Recommendations

Member States suggested a series of practical ways forward and recommendations for guiding the UN system's work on the ground in order to accelerate implementation and impact, including:

- The ECOSOC and the PBC should consider how to strengthen their collaboration generally, and on West Africa and the Sahel in particular to help address the challenges related to transhumance, promote sustainable development and support peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts, in line with their respective mandates. The Council could take advantage of its resolution on the Sahel to guide next steps. The Commission, in turn, could continue to play its advisory role to the Security Council on this topic, including ahead of UNOWAS mandate renewals. The 2020 review of the peacebuilding architecture would be an opportunity to strengthen ECOSOC-PBC collaboration.
- In its responses to transhumance related challenges in the Sahel and West Africa the UN System is encouraged to:
 - Foster a cross-pillar, holistic and integrated approach to addressing these multi-dimensional challenges, recognising the inter-linkages between development, peace and security and the need to address the root causes of instability, with livelihoods as a key component;
 - support locally-driven solutions, reflecting local contexts, knowledge, traditions and practices;
 - enhance the role of youth and women in shaping peacebuilding initiatives;
 - ensure a regional and cross-border approach, in support of related efforts of ECOWAS and AU and other regional bodies;

- strengthen national capacities to provide governance and rule of law, social services, and security for citizens;
- accelerate concrete action on the ground to achieve tangible results, ensuring continued monitoring and evaluation to build on good practices;
- monitor and assess the potential for transhumance-related instability in other localised regions to inform responses and prevent conflict elsewhere.

In conclusion, the ECOSOC President and the PBC Chair affirmed that the two intergovernmental entities are fully committed to supporting the countries of the region in their efforts to ensure peacebuilding and sustaining peace and development by bringing together the UN system, Member States, international, regional, sub-regional, and local institutions and actors. ECOSOC would continue to play its role to coordinate and guide the UN system so that it provides effective collective support to respond to the challenges discussed on this meeting, and the two bodies would spare no effort in their advocacy for the international community's continuing engagement in the Sahel region. It was recognized that working with all partners at national, regional and international levels and across all intergovernmental bodies, in a coordinated and integrated manner could reap dividends for the people of the Sahel.