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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
358TH MEETING
7 MARCH 2013
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/2(CCCLVIII)
Original : French

**PROGRESS REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON
THE AFRICAN-LED INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT MISSION IN MALI**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM/2.(CCCLIII) adopted at its 353rd meeting, held on 25 January 2013, Council stressed the need to speed up the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) and to ensure its effective operation, as well as to build the capacity of the Defence and Security Forces of Mali (FDSM). In this regard, Council requested the AU and ECOWAS Commissions, in cooperation with the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and other partners, to review the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) of AFISMA, as approved by its 341st meeting, held on 13 November 2012 [PSC/PR/COMM.2(CCCXLI)], in order to increase the authorized strength of AFISMA, including through the integration of troops provided by Chad and other contingents under preparation, and consequently better meet the needs on the ground.

2. The present report takes stock of the deployment of AFISMA and provides an update on the results of the review process of the Mission's CONOPS. The report also addresses the envisaged transformation of the AFISMA into a UN operation. It concludes with recommendations on the way forward.

II. STATE OF DEPLOYMENT OF AFISMA

3. The push of the armed groups towards the South and the subsequent Franco-Malian operation, which helped put an end to it and initiate the process for the liberation of the North, led to the acceleration of the deployment of AFISMA and the adoption of other measures. Several Member States of ECOWAS and other African countries took steps, either to announce troop contributions to AFISMA and/or accelerate their deployment (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Chad) or, particularly with regard to the immediate neighbours of Mali (Algeria and Mauritania), to further strengthen the monitoring of their borders, or even close them, to prevent movement of arms or fighters for the armed rebel, terrorist and criminal groups. The strength of 3,300 uniformed personnel provided for in the AFISMA CONOPS, as authorized by Council in its communiqué of 13 November 2012 and the UN Security Council in its resolution 2085 (2012) of 20 December 2012, was quickly overtaken by the seriousness of the threat.

4. As of 3 March 2013, the AU and ECOWAS had recorded pledges up to 7,727 military and police personnel. On the same date, 6,167 troops, broken down as follows, were deployed on the ground: Benin (300) Burkina Faso (498), Ghana (125), Guinea (144), Niger (675), Nigeria (1,186), Senegal (501), Chad (2,015) and Togo (723). In coordination with the French and Malian forces, the contingents of AFISMA occupy strategic positions throughout the Malian territory, especially in Bamako (Benin and Ghana), in Markala and Diabali (Burkina Faso), in San (Guinea and Senegal), in Ansongo and Gao (Niger), in Banamba (Nigeria), in Kidal and Tessalit (Chad), in Sevare, Bandiagara and Koro (Togo). Preparations are also underway for the deployment of the first police elements and a nucleus of the civilian component, in the month of March 2013.

5. In the aftermath of the liberation of the major cities of the North, the Malian army, the French forces and AFISMA are striving to secure this part of the country. Operations are ongoing in the Adrar of the Ifoghas, in the North-East. Significant progress has been made in this regard. The positive evolution of the security situation has enabled the beginning of the return of civilians who had been displaced.

6. In its communiqué of 25 January 2013, Council requested me, in consultation with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the troop-contributing countries, to proceed immediately with the appointment of the Special Representative, Head of AFISMA, as well as the establishment of all the necessary mechanisms to ensure the effective command and control of the Mission. Pursuant to this decision, and after appropriate consultations, I appointed, on 30 January 2013, the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, President Pierre Buyoya, as the Special Representative and Head of AFISMA. He took office at the beginning of February 2013. Ambassador Cheaka Touré of Togo, until then the ECOWAS Special Representative in Mali, was appointed as Deputy to President Buyoya. Furthermore, the Mali Integrated Task Force (MITF) was established. Composed of representatives of the AU, ECOWAS and the United Nations and based in Addis Ababa, the MITF is responsible for coordination at the strategic level of AFISMA. The MITF was formally launched on 29 January 2013, on the occasion of a meeting I chaired and at which the ECOWAS Commission President and the UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs participated. The MITF has since then met several times. A Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM), as the operational coordination cell, was established in Bamako, under the leadership of the Special Representative, Head of AFISMA. In addition to the AU, ECOWAS and the United Nations, the JCM also includes representatives of the Malian state and those of partners. Finally, arrangements are being made for the operationalization of the Headquarters of the Mission. Staff from the AU and ECOWAS Commissions, as well as from countries of the region, will be seconded to the Mission on a temporary basis, pending the finalization of the recruitment process. Arrangements have also been made with regard to the Status of Mission Agreement, office leasing and purchase of equipment.

7. Pursuant to the relevant provisions of the communiqué of Council of 13 November 2013, and in conformity with resolution 2085 (2012), the Commission organized a Donors' Conference in Addis Ababa, on 29 January 2013, to mobilize both financial and logistical support for AFISMA and the MDSF. Given the level of participation and the pledges made, the Conference was a real success. It recorded pledges amounting to US\$ 455 million. It is important that the pledges made be honored as soon as possible.

8. On 5 February 2013, the EU hosted the 3rd meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on the situation in Mali, which is co-chaired by the AU, ECOWAS and the United Nations. The meeting provided an opportunity for Mali and its partners to exchange views on the evolution of the situation and the measures to be taken in order to consolidate the progress made, in particular through the implementation of the Roadmap for the Transition endorsed by the Malian National Assembly on 29 January 2013.

III. REVISION OF THE CONOPS OF AFISMA

9. Pursuant to the above-mentioned decision of Council, a planning conference was held in Bamako from 15 to 21 February 2013. It prepared a revised joint CONOPS, based on the latest developments on the ground. The Conference brought together military and civilian experts of the AU and ECOWAS Commissions, Mali and bilateral and multilateral partners. The revised CONOPS provides for an increase in the strength of AFISMA from 3,300 to 9,620 troops, including 171 elements of the civilian component, 8,859 troops and 590 police personnel.

10. In its new format, AFISMA aims particularly at the following strategic objectives: facilitate the mobilization of resources to support the MDSF; support the Malian authorities for the restoration of State authority and the preservation of the national unity and territorial integrity of Mali; reduce the threats posed by the terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks in Mali and establish a safe and secure environment; support the Malian authorities in the implementation of the Roadmap for the Transition and assist in the Defence and Security Sector Reform. The operations will be conducted in three phases: an expansion and consolidation phase, currently underway, a stabilization phase, which covers the election period, and, finally, a phase of transfer of responsibilities to the MDSF.

11. The AU Commission provides strategic direction for AFISMA. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission is responsible for the implementation of the Mission's mandate and exercises authority over all civilian, military and police personnel in the Mission area. The Deputy Special Representative will be responsible for managing the civilian organic units. The Force Commander and Chief of the Police component have operational control over the forces assigned to them. The CONOPS was endorsed by the 42nd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Yamoussoukro, from 27 to 28 February 2013. The CONOPS is herewith attached.

IV. TRANSFORMATION OF AFISMA INTO A UNITED NATIONS OPERATION

12. While the AU and ECOWAS are endeavoring, through AFISMA, to provide initial support to the Malian authorities, it is clear that UN assistance is required regarding the stabilization of the situation in the long term, including through the transformation of AFISMA into a UN operation. At its meeting in Brussels, on 5 February, the Support and Follow-up Group supported such a transformation, specifying, in this regard, that a UN operation should be provided with an adequate mandate and contribute to the preservation of Mali's national unity and territorial integrity. The 42nd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government requested the ECOWAS Commission, in close cooperation with the AU Commission, to submit a request to the United Nations to support the formal request by Mali regarding the transformation of AFISMA into a UN peacekeeping operation, with an appropriate mandate, as soon as conditions permit. In this context, it is crucial that ECOWAS and the AU ensure that the transformation of AFISMA into a UN operation is done under

conditions that enable the consolidation of the remarkable gains made on the ground and create conditions for lasting peace and stability in Mali and for the region as a whole.

13. More specifically, it is essential that any UN operation is provided with an adequate mandate and conceive its role as one of providing strong support to the Malian Government. Obviously, it cannot be a traditional peacekeeping mission, whose deployment is subject to the prior establishment of a "peace to keep". Rather it should be a peace enforcement mission, based on Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. In other words, the proposed UN operation must help with the full restoration of the Malian Government authority over its entire territory and the preservation of Mali's national unity and territorial integrity, including supporting the efforts to dismantle the terrorist and criminal networks operating in the North of the country. In this regard, the military component of the Mission should have a rapid reaction capability robust enough to attain the objectives being pursued.

14. Further, it is important that a UN mission operates in support of the political role of ECOWAS and the AU. In the recent months, the two organizations have demonstrated a real dynamism in the management of the crisis in Mali. I note, in this regard, the numerous Summits organized by ECOWAS and the crucial role it has played in the sensitization and mobilization of the international community, as well as the important decisions taken by the AU, both at the level of Council and the Assembly of the Union. This political support by the region and the continent will be essential in the upcoming phase. The objective is not only to support the completion of the Transition, but also, in the period that will follow, to assist efforts at political and governance reform which the Malian actors must necessarily undertake to address the root causes of the multidimensional crisis affecting their country. Thanks to their respective instruments in the area of democracy and governance, to which Mali is a party, ECOWAS and the AU are particularly well placed to contribute to this process.

15. Similarly, the proposed United Nations Mission should contribute to the deepening of regional cooperation in the area of security. This is crucial for the success of the fight against terrorism and transnational crime, which remains, more than ever before, a priority. In this context, drawing lessons from the situation experienced, it is necessary to improve the arrangements provided for by the African Peace and Security Architecture, through the establishment of mechanisms that will aim at facilitating coordination and synergy in the area of intelligence gathering and exchange, training and equipment, in order to promote collective security in the Sahel-Sahara space.

16. It is highly desirable that the appointment of the Special Representative who would lead a possible United Nations Mission be done after appropriate consultations with ECOWAS and the AU, to contribute to the African ownership of this effort and optimize the efficiency of the Mission. Within this framework, it is important to ensure continuity in the leadership of the Mission.

17. In a more general way, the objective of the international community should be to strengthen the leadership of, and ownership by, the Malians of the process to end the crisis and consolidate the Malian state. This ownership is at the heart of the Strategic Concept for

the Resolution of the Crises in Mali, adopted by Council, on 24 October 2012. In this perspective, the process of the reconstruction of the Malian state must be designed and led by the Malians themselves. International actors have, indeed, a role to play, but it must clearly be a supportive one, in strict respect of Mali's sovereignty.

18. In order to facilitate the eventual transfer of the AFISMA to the United Nations, it is essential to mobilize, in favor of the Mission, all the necessary support to enable it improve its standards and operate more effectively. Accordingly, I would like to reiterate the AU's request to the Security Council to authorize, at the earliest, the establishment of a support mechanism that is predictable, flexible and sustainable.

19. Once AFISMA is transformed into a UN operation, the AU and ECOWAS should maintain a joint presence in Mali through a Support Mission in Mali, whose modalities and format will be determined by the two Commissions, in close coordination with Malian authorities. Such a Mission would not only further demonstrate the close partnership between ECOWAS and the AU, within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture, but also bear testimony to the continued commitment of both organizations to work with Mali towards promoting lasting peace, security, stability and development in that country. It is clearly understood that such a Mission would work closely and in a complementary manner with the envisaged United Nations operation.

V. OBSERVATIONS

20. Clearly, significant progress has been made in Mali both at the political and military levels. This progress should be consolidated. I urge the Malian actors to effectively implement the Transition Roadmap, under the leadership of the civilian authorities, which should culminate in the organization of presidential and legislative elections. I reaffirm AU's support to the transitional authorities. Equally important is the completion of the reconciliation process within the Malian army, initiated by the Interim President and his Prime Minister. I encourage the Malian authorities to spare no effort to promote reconciliation in the North and prevent any action likely to undermine relations among the communities living in this region, a situation which would further compound peace-building efforts.

21. In parallel, the countries of the region should enhance their cooperation in the area of security to face the ever-present threat of terrorism and organized transnational crime. The Commission will make every effort to support the efforts of countries of the region. It is in this against this background that it will convene in Nouakchott, on 17 March 2013, a consultative meeting between Mali and its neighbors to discuss intelligence sharing and border monitoring, as well as the establishment of a security architecture for the Sahel-Saharan region.

22. I recommend to Council to adopt the revised CONOPS and to extend its support towards its effective implementation on the ground. It is also important that Council reaffirm the principles that should guide the possible transformation of AFISMA into a UN operation. Such a position, which would come in support of the statement made by ECOWAS, would enable the ECOWAS and AU Commissions, to have all the necessary

authority and the political guidance to interact effectively with the members of the Security Council and the UN Secretariat, as well as to mobilize international partners so that African concerns are adequately taken into account. In the meantime, efforts should be pursued to mobilize, in favor of AFISMA, the necessary financial and logistical support. In this regard, I reiterate the need for the UN to establish appropriate arrangements to enable the Mission to function effectively. I urge the other AU partners to contribute to this effort.

23. I would like to pay tribute to all the forces engaged in the current operations in the North of Mali and salute their courage and determination. I note, in particular, the sacrifices made by a significant number of Chadian soldiers who died on the battle field during the fighting that took place in the Adrar of the Ifoghas. I welcome the prospect of new contributions to AFISMA, announced by Burundi and The Comoros, and the participation in a possible UN operation, confirmed by Mauritania.

24. For its part, the Commission will spare no effort to help address the challenges and ensure the success of the action of Africa and the rest of the international community. In this context, and in view of the importance of strategic coordination between all stakeholders, I discussed with the UN Secretary-General in Addis Ababa, on 24 February 2013. For his part, the Commissioner for Peace and Security met with President Idriss Debyltno, in N'djamena, on 15 February 2013. On 28 February, at the 42nd Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS authority, at which he represented the AU, the Commissioner for Peace and Security was received by President Alassane Ouattara, in Yamoussoukro. Similarly, the Commissioner has maintained close contacts with the relevant officials of the ECOWAS Commission and those of the UN Secretariat. For his part, President Buyoya remains in close contact with the leaders of Mali, as well as with other stakeholders, including leaders of the troop contributing countries to AFISMA.

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