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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1166TH MEETING

31 JULY 2023
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/FIELD MISSION/RPT.1166 (2023)

REPORT

**FIELD MISSION OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL TO THE BURKINABE REPUBLIC CONDUCTED
FROM 22 TO 27 JULY 2023**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
IHL/IHRL	International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law
MISAHEL	AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel
MPs	Members of Parliament
Psc	Peace and Security Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIDAB	United Nations Interim Action Plan for Sustainable Development
VPDs	Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland

I. INTRODUCTION

1. From 22 to 27 July 2023, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) undertook a field mission to Burkina Faso within the context of its Mandate of and functions as stipulated in Article 6 (a) to (g) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, namely: “... *promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa; early warning and preventive diplomacy; peace-making, including the use of good offices, mediation, conciliation and inquiry; peace support operations and intervention, pursuant to article 4(h) and (j) of the Constitutive Act; peace building and post-conflict reconstruction; humanitarian action and disaster management; and any other function as may be decided by the Assembly*”.

II. COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION

2. The Mission was led by H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Lamine Thiaw, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the AU and PSC Chairperson for the month of July 2023, and comprised representatives of all the fifteen Members of the AU PSC, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Djibouti, The Gambia, Ghana, Kingdom of Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The Delegation was accompanied by the AU High Representative for Mali and Sahel, who is also the Head of MISAHEL, H.E. Maman Sambo Sidikou, as well as staff from the AU Commission.

III. OBJECTIVES

3. The field mission was conducted with the following objectives:

- i. To express solidarity, provide support and reaffirm the commitment of the AU to the Government and people of the Republic of Burkina Faso in addressing the plethora of challenges ranging from terrorism and violent extremism, inter-communal violence, climate change and humanitarian related challenges, as well as political transition;
- ii. Obtaining first-hand information on the political, security, socio-economic, and humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso; and
- iii. To ascertain the state of progress in the implementation of the Transition Roadmap in the country.

4. The first-hand information gathered through this field mission will enable the PSC to adopt evidence-based decisions on the required next steps in supporting the efforts already being deployed by the Transitional Government of Burkina Faso in addressing the challenges at hand.

IV. METHODOLOGY

5. The PSC, upon arrival, received a comprehensive briefing by the AU High Representative for Mali and Sahel and Head of MISAHEL. On 23 July 2023, the PSC Delegation paid a visit to a camp in Nagreongo in the Central Plateau region, hosting a number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which enabled the PSC to have a glimpse of the dire humanitarian situation in the country. This was followed and complemented by a series of extensive consultations with other key stakeholders, namely: The President of the Transition; Cabinet Ministers, the Prime Minister of the Transition, the Speaker of the Transitional Legislative Assembly; the Africa Group of Ambassadors accredited to Burkina Faso; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the United Nations; political parties recognized by the Transition Charter and represented in the Transition Legislative Assembly.

6. Notably, at the beginning of the PSC consultations with each of the various interlocutors outlined above, the PSC Chairperson and Head of the Delegation always began by highlighting the objectives of the field mission, the key messages and the expected outcome. Thereafter the interlocutors would share their perspectives with the PSC Delegation followed by discussions. Below is a summary of the first-hand information gathered by the PSC regarding the political, security, socio-economic and humanitarian situation prevailing in the country:

V. KEY FINDINGS

a) Political Situation

- Political Transition

7. The PSC Delegation held a consultation with the Prime Minister, H.E Apollinaire Joachim Kyélem de Tambèla, who first outlined the key priorities of the Transition Government. It was stressed that the main aim of the transition roadmap was to regain the territorial integrity of Burkina Faso, restore security throughout the country and address the humanitarian situation. The Delegation was informed that since 1960, Burkina Faso had known eleven (11) presidents, due to institutional instability. The Prime Minister highlighted the need to assess the state of progress in achieving AU vision and the need for the AU to support the common position of Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea towards ensuring enhanced security and greater stability in the region. The Prime Minister emphasized the urgent need for the AU to explore alternative means of financial resource mobilization to reduce dependence on partners.

8. The African Diplomatic Group informed the PSC Delegation about the recent deployment of H.E. Patrice Talon, President of the Republic of Benin by ECOWAS as Facilitator of the three transitions in West Africa and encouraged more participation and involvement of the AU in such processes. It was further underlined that the principle of subsidiarity and comparative advantage should entail robust collaboration between the AU and ECOWAS and not the contrary. The PSC Delegation was further informed of the challenges faced by the transition monitoring mechanism, including the visit of the ECOWAS Mediator for Burkina Faso, which did not take place. Meanwhile, the ECOWAS Representative underscored that contrary to ongoing speculations, ECOWAS was well engaged in the events of the country since the 1st coup d'état in January 2022.

9. Throughout the engagements with stakeholders, there has been a lack of clarity on the agenda of the transition, specifically the initially agreed deadline, and inoperability of the Monitoring Mechanism of the transition, which remains imperative in defining critical gains of the transition process.

10. Honorable Speaker of the Transitional Legislative Assembly of Burkina Faso, Dr. Ousmane Bougouma briefed the PSC Delegation on the current structure of the Transitional Legislative Assembly. The Transitional Legislative Assembly is structured according to the Transitional Charter promulgated in October 2022, made up of seventy-one (71) Members of Parliament (MPs), and their credentials are validated by a commission of inquiry and deliberation. In this regard, the Head of State nominated twenty (20) MPs, thirteen (13) from prominent regional stakeholders (one person per region), twelve (12) MPs from a cross-section of Political parties, sixteen (16) MPs from Security and Defense forces, and ten (10) MPs from Civil Society Organizations, including economic operators, women, youths, disabled groups and farmers. He added that the Assembly has been able to adopt eighteen (18) bills and have on several occasions questioned the Government on key measures in the country.

11. The Speaker explained that the Transition Charter had a timeline on which the 24 July 2024 deadline was collectively agreed upon with ECOWAS as the deadline for the elections and as per the reporting, the timeline remains valid. He however stressed that it was needful to examine the fundamental issues in the country, especially the security context, in light of the transition roadmap. He highlighted that if the key challenges and threats facing the country were addressed before the agreed deadlines, the transition government would call for elections before 2024. Furthermore, regarding the transitional agenda, the Speaker underscored that the Transition Authority had engaged in consultations with key stakeholders across the country, including traditional and religious leaders, and women groups among others, to sample their perspectives on key reforms such as the constitution, electoral code, the transition charter among others and that the report is being prepared and findings will be shared.



Figure 1: The AU PSC paid a courtesy call to the President of the Transition, Captain Traore.

- Elections Process

12. The Government Officials informed the PSC Delegation of its readiness to hold elections as soon as the security situation permits. They emphasized that terrorism threats in the country will not allow elections to take place due to inaccessibility to some parts of the country. Relatedly, ECOWAS informed that while there remain a lot of uncertainties on the holding of the elections in July 2024 and the effective operationalization of the transition roadmap, ECOWAS understands that given the dire security and humanitarian situation, as well as the inability of the monitoring mechanism to hold its working sessions with the Authorities, it may not be possible to hold elections within scheduled dates. This has been the views of several stakeholders engaged with the PSC Delegation. Nonetheless, the Monitoring Mechanism on the Transition is determined to see to it that the agreed Calendar is respected though not within the earlier defined scheduled date of July 2024.

- Activities of Political parties

13. During consultations with the Representatives of Political Parties, the PSC Delegation was apprised by Representatives from the four key political blocks, who underscored concerns on the political situation in the country. While the affirmed efforts regarding the drafting of the transition

charter and ongoing stakeholder consultations, they stressed on the need to be included in the management process of internal matters and security situation of the country. Shared consensus with the efforts of the Government including the recruitment of the VDPs and some milestone achievements in the theatre of operation. They however noted that they were still awaiting the establishment of the consultation framework promised by the Authorities, especially given the fact that activities of the political parties had been suspended.

14. Furthermore, they reiterated the need for the consultation platform, in order to foster inclusive participation in the management of the transition process and called for the revision of Burkina Faso's suspension and subsequent reinsertion into the instances of the African Union, in order to facilitate international and national consultations. The Representatives of Political Parties informed that activities of political parties were suspended, and that there were no clear indications, but however, cited Communiqué No 3 on peace measures, when the situation in the country was volatile, and which has now become standard. They nevertheless urged that while their activities remain suspended, an opening could be made to allow for meetings at statutory levels, in order to avoid further deterioration of the country.

15. Alluding to the current suspension of activities of Political Parties, the Speaker reiterated that there were 12 MPs representing the political parties in the Assembly. He scored that however, interaction has been challenging given the ongoing suspension, and when the said Representatives are called for consultations, it usually turns down, citing the ongoing suspension, however, they are available when other Stakeholders or institutions call for engagement. He underscored the need for consensual engagements with the political parties before any suspension could be lifted, but it's not the case. He added that if the Burkinabe did not want the current transition in place, it would have long been overthrown. He stressed that the steps undertaken on key reforms were collective, to ensure the country effectively addresses its challenges and avoid any relapse.



Figure 2: PSC Members engaging with the speaker of the National Assembly

b) Security Situation

16. For more than five years armed terrorist Islamist groups across the Central Sahel in general, and Burkina Faso in particular, have systematically used sieges, abductions, kidnapping, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and landmines targeting innocent civilians and symbols of the State, wanton destruction of public infrastructure, such as electricity poles, bridges and mobile telephone

infrastructure. As with the rest of the Sahel, the security situation in Burkina Faso remains extremely volatile. More than 1 million people live in areas under blockade and face daily threats of violence. For example, on April 15, 2023, a major attack targeted a detachment of government forces and volunteers for the defense of the homeland (VDP), who were deployed near the airfield 15 km from Ouahigouya, leading to about forty (40) deaths, including six (6) soldiers and thirty-four (34) VDP.

17. The security situation is yet to improve, despite the sustained offensive currently underway by the government forces with the support of the VDP. The PSC Delegation was informed that the Government forces are making significant gains and have continued to recover more territory from the terrorist groups and now in control of between 65% and 70% of the national territory, which is a significant improvement from the 40% during the previous Government. Recent large-scale operations against the terrorist groups, include LAABINGOL, and the Warweogo forest, where several terrorists were killed and military equipment was captured.

18. The PSC Delegation was also informed that the Government forces were facing serious capacity challenges, but they were fully committed and determined to defeat terrorism and insurgents using the available limited material, financial and human resources. The Delegation was also informed that contrary to falsehoods being peddled by the social media, the VDP were not a militia, but rather, patriotic youth volunteers who were ready to die in defence of their country. The concept of VDP was voted for in January 2020 by the National Legislative Assembly that was actually chaired by local civilians, in the context of the prevailing security situation in the country. The representatives of the Transitional Government clarified that recruitment into the VDP is conducted on a voluntary basis through a careful vetting and selection process, which is followed by a 45-day training that includes courses on International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law (IHL/IHRL) and subsequent deployment at community and national levels. The VDP are embedded in and strictly supervised by the national armed forces with whom they conduct operations. They are recruited for one year and are compensated in the event of death in the line of duty. They are also punished if they violate the laws of the land.

19. Furthermore, the Delegation was informed that the majority of the terrorists active in the country were Burkinabe, using highly sophisticated weapons and reportedly receiving support from outside the country as some of the captured terrorists had cash amounting to approximately 50000 Euros. Emphasis was laid on the need for enhanced collaboration and coordination of efforts between and among the countries of the region affected by the scourge of terrorism. The importance of mutual assistance as opposed to punitive measures was also underscored, adding that there was no worse crime than preventing a country to exercise its right to self-defence.

20. Furthermore, there was an appeal for the AU to review its classic approach and response to unconstitutional changes of government in Member States, as well as a call for the AU to lift the suspension of Burkina Faso from participating in the activities of the Union and its Organs because the punitive measures were significantly impacting negatively on the country's efforts to fight terrorism and expedite the transition process. There was a call for the AU to show more compassion and solidarity particularly with those Member States in political transition who were also simultaneously grappling with the scourge of terrorism. The Burkinabe stakeholders stressed the importance of collective security approached in the fight against terrorism and warned that if Burkina Faso loses the current fight, the consequences for the entire region and, in particular, the coastal countries of West Africa will be disastrous and catastrophic. This is because of the geostrategic location of Burkina Faso in central West Africa region and is a buffer country.

21. The PSC delegation was assured that the government forces were making progress in the fight against terrorism, in part due to the fact that the Government forces fully respect human rights, IHL and IHRL. In addition, the Delegation was informed that the armed forces are guided by existing AU

and international human rights instruments including the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. Furthermore, the Delegation was informed about the human rights compliance measures put in place by the Government, which include an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights and a National Committee for Human Rights. The Delegation was assured the inter-ministerial Committee systematically investigates all cases of alleged violations of human rights. In addition, Legal Advisors are embedded in all Units of the Armed Forces fighting terrorism. Furthermore, these Units of the Armed Forces undergo pre-deployment training on human rights. Although, as of the time of the field mission, about 68 people had been prosecuted one of the challenges being faced by the Government was the use of treachery and deception by terrorist groups, which often complicates the investigations of cases of alleged human rights violation.

22. In addition, the deteriorating security situation is preventing political parties from conducting their activities, which makes it highly impossible for the Government to successfully organize transparent, inclusive and credible democratic elections as initially envisaged.

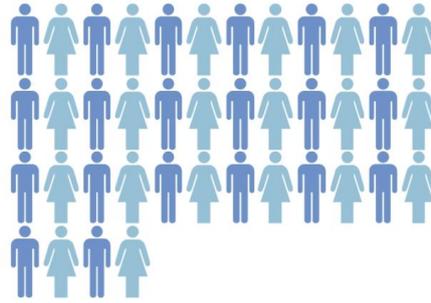
c) Humanitarian and socio-economic Situation

23. From the visit to Nagreongo and consultations with various stakeholders, the PSC Delegation learned that the worsening security situation in Burkina Faso, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, have collectively resulted in a dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation characterized by displacement of the population both, as refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as high cost of living. The President of the Transition informed the PSC Delegation that the situation at the Nagreongo IDP Camp was just "a tip of an iceberg" as there were other IDP camps in the country that are even worse. Schools have been either destroyed or closed resulting in thousands of school dropouts. The population is facing serious food insecurity due to the deliberate destruction of agricultural infrastructure and food crops by terrorists. Humanitarian access is also a challenge because the routes to the population in need are infested with landmines, improvised explosive devices, and deliberate attacks against humanitarian aid agencies. In addition, there are reports of serious sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls.

24. According to official figures from the UNHCR, there are over 13,558 IDPs spread over two sites. The second site is not accessible, which is why the delegation could not visit it. Of the 13,558 IDPs, 61% are children (girls and boys); 22% are women and the rest are men. There are single-parent families living in precarious conditions, most of whom are women. The Transitional Government has registered almost 2 million (2,062,534) internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout the country. 17.59% of them are men; 23.91% are women; and 58.50% are children. On the other hand, the representatives of the United Nations informed the PSC Delegation that due to the prevailing insecurity in Burkina Faso, there are now over 2 million internally displaced people and refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, etc.

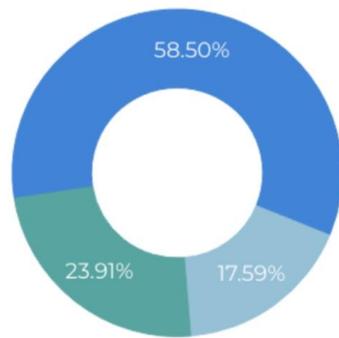
ACCORDING TO THE UNHCR

13,558
**INTERNALLY
 DISPLACED
 PERSONS**
 SPREAD OVER TWO SITES



CHILDREN 61%
WOMEN 22%
MEN 17%

Internally Displaced Persons in Burkina Faso



Men 17.59% Women 23.91% Children 58.50%

Transitional Government has registered almost 2 million (2,062,534) internally displaced persons (IDPs) throughout the country of which 17.59% of them are men; 23.91% are women; and 58.50% are children.



Due to the prevailing insecurity in Burkina Faso, there are now over 2 million internally displaced people and refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana.



Representatives of the United Nations

25. The Transitional Government has adopted a stabilization action plan for 2023, 2024 and 2025. It should also be noted that the United Nations has set up a transition support framework for the period 2023-2025. This framework (UNIDAB) places the issue of peace at the heart of the development agenda. However, one major challenge relates to budgetary support from partners which is falling.

26. The Government is providing food; agricultural inputs and psycho-social support to IDPs in order to enable them to produce their own food and reduce dependence on food aid, its capacity is very limited. The PSC delegation was informed that, due to the gradual improvements in the security situation in areas liberated/recovered from terrorist groups, approximately 136,712 people had already voluntarily returned to their original villages, as of 23 June 2023. An appeal was made for support to Government efforts to improve the conditions in the liberated zones, including effective restoration of basic public services, and quick impact and peace strengthening projects as peace dividends and public diplomacy efforts (to win the hearts and minds of the affected population).



Figure 3: The PSC Delegation equally visited an IDP Camp, in Nagréongo, within the Plateau-Central region, situated about 30km from the capital, Ouagadougou.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

27. The political, security, socio-economic and humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso remain dire. While there is need to acknowledge the progress registered, thus far, the political transition remains complex and protracted due to the deteriorating security situation affecting, not only Burkina Faso, but the entire Sahel region. Defeating terrorism and improving the security situation, maintaining territorial integrity and national unity are top priorities and key factors in ensuring a successful political transition and ultimately restoration of constitutional order.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

28. In view of the first-hand information obtained during the field mission, Council may wish to consider the following recommendations, namely:

- a) Reiterate the AU solidarity with the Government and people of Burkina Faso and commitment to continue supporting them in their relentless pursuit for lasting peace, security, stability, and prosperity, which will tremendously benefit the country, the region and the Continent as a whole;
- b) Commend the Transitional Authority for the progress achieved thus far, regarding the establishment of the Transition Roadmap, and electoral calendar, including the Independent National Electoral Commission, and urge the Transitional Authority to practically demonstrate its commitment and ensure that elections are successfully organized and to complete the Transition within the stipulated timelines;
- c) Underscore the need for an inclusive transition process and the imperative to work with all key stakeholders, at national and local levels to ensure national ownership, a whole-of-society approach and a comprehensive process; and urge the Authorities to work with the AU Commission and ECOWAS in order to facilitate expeditious return to normal constitutional order;

- d) Reiterate the need for effective compliance with International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law and the African Union Compliance and Accountability Framework, within military operations and regional security operations of the respective countries.
- e) Emphasize the need for increased interoperability and coordination between AU, ECOWAS and the Government of Burkina Faso in ascertaining an effective political transition process in the country;
- f) Call on the operationalization of the AU, UN, ECOWAS, Joint Transition Monitoring Mechanism, including the resumption of the work of the ECOWAS Mediators in providing requisite support towards the effective implementation of the transition Roadmap;
- g) Underline the importance of upscaling the AU Humanitarian support package in order to provide adequate support to deteriorating humanitarian situation;
- h) Urge the Transitional Authorities in Burkina Faso to lift the ban on the activities of political parties and other key stakeholders, in order to foster an inclusive, participatory and credible political transition process;
- i) Encourage all political parties, civil society organizations and the media to play a more constructive role; place the supreme interests of the country above all else and to refrain from any activities that may further inflame the current situation;
- j) Request the AU Commission to earnestly facilitate the operationalization of existing financial mechanisms, including AFSIT and the Crisis Reserve Facility, among others, as vital instruments for providing a comprehensive support package to the transition process in Burkina Faso; and
- k) Decide to remain actively seized of the matter.

VIII. VOTE OF THANKS

29. At the end of the field mission, on behalf of the PSC Delegation, the PSC Chairperson expressed appreciation to the Transitional Authority, for the warm welcome, hospitality and facilitation of the successful conduct of the field mission.

ANNEX: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS OF THE PSC		
#	Name	Country
1.	H.E Amb. Mohamed Lamine Thiaw, Head of Delegation Mr. Papa Dieng	Senegal
2.	Amb. Churchill Ewumbue-Monono	Cameroon
3.	Amb. Daniel Owassa	Congo
4.	Amb. Abdi Mahamoud Eybe	Djibouti
5.	Amb. Jainaba Jagne	Gambia
6.	Amb. Innocent Eugene Shiyo	Tanzania
7.	Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo Mr. Michael Wamai	Uganda
8.	Amb. Nasir Aminu Mr. Samuel Victor Makwe	Nigeria
9.	Mme Venerande Hakizimana	Burundi
10.	Mr. Kwasi Asante	Ghana
11.	Ms. Khadija Znaidi	Morocco
12.	Ms. Ingrid Zemburuka	Namibia
13.	Ms. Nothando Thobile Hlatshwayo	South Africa
14.	Mr. Jemmali Montassar	Tunisia
15.	Mr. Tapiwa Masunungure	Zimbabwe

COUNTRY CONCERNED		
1.	Amb. Sylvain Yamtiguimda Yameog	Burkina Faso

AU COMMISSION		
1.	Amb. Maman Sambo Sidikou,	AU High Representative for Mali and Sahel & Head of MISAHEL
2.	Ms. Neema Nicholas Chusi	Head, PSC Secretariat
3.	Mr. Simon Badza	Political Officer, PSC Secretariat
4.	Ms. Mayah Ngalla	Senior Political Officer/Regional Desk Officer
5.	Mr. Eugene Bope Bakama	Transitional Justice Specialist, Governance and Conflict Prevention Directorate
6.	Mr. Isevboje Sunday, Imosemi	Office of the Commissioner, PAPS
7.	Ms. Joyeuse Mutambarungu	Finance Officer
8.	Mr. Tayu Shawel	Administrative Assistant, PSC Secretariat
9.	Mr. George Mefful	English interpreter
10.	Mr. Paulin Somda	French Interpreter

2023-08-03

Communiqué of the 1166th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, held on 3 August 2023, on the Consideration of the Report of the PSC Field Mission to Burkina Faso.

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