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Joint ECOSOC-PBC meeting on the Impact of Cross-border Transhumance on Sustainable Peace and Development in West Africa and the Sahel

Tuesday, 3 December 2019; 10:00am-13:00am

Statement by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission

OPENING REMARKS

Your Excellency Ms. Mona Juul, President of the Economic and Social Council,

Members of the Economic and Social Council,

Members of the Peacebuilding Commission,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The long-standing commitment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to meet regularly is a testament to the deep-rooted partnership that the two bodies built over the years on issues pertaining to development and peacebuilding. The meeting today will explore ways and means to further support regional initiatives that aim to promote a peaceful transhumance, with a focus on West Africa and the Sahel. It reaffirms the commitment of ECOSOC and the PBC to accompany the countries of West Africa and the Sahel in their efforts to ensure peacebuilding and development, building on past ECOSOC and Security Council discussions and resolutions on instability in the Sahel, including on the adverse impact of climate change in the region, and taking into consideration recent regional initiatives, particularly of ECOWAS, ECCAS, and the African Union. The discussion will also build on last year's joint ECOSOC-PBC meeting on the *"Linkage between climate change and the challenges to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel region"* which recommended the continued engagement of the two entities in support of sustainable development and peacebuilding in the Sahel.

In recent years, traditional arrangements to resolve conflicts and ensure a peaceful transhumance, which contributes significantly to some local economies, have come under increasing pressure due to a multitude of factors, including reduction of grazable land, water scarcity, food insecurity, socio-economic challenges, limitations of peripheral rule of law, and the

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influence of illegal armed and terrorist groups. The joint platform provided today by ECOSOC and the PBC offers a unique opportunity to promote inclusive solutions in tackling this multi-dimensional issue that impacts several Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations system is committed to supporting peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts in West Africa and the Sahel, and we will hear today from the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Ms. Ruby Sandhu-Rojon, recent efforts to strengthen and coordinate United Nations action in support of ECOWAS action to prevent and respond to tensions between pastoralists and farmers in West Africa and the Sahel in a holistic manner. Other United Nations entities will have a chance to complement her presentation with interventions from the floor.

The effects of climate change-induced reduction of grazable land are felt most dramatically by those living in extreme poverty, the majority of whom are female. This is at odds with the fact that only a very small percentage of development aid is provided to women-led environmental programs. We will hear today from Ms. Mariam Wallet Med Aboubak on needed investments in such initiatives. Ms. Aboubak is a member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and a member of 'Tin Hinan', a women association working for the defence, promotion and development of indigenous peoples in Africa. Building on these insights, Mr. Jon Mitchell's presentation, from the Overseas Development Institute, will highlight social, economic, and political challenges and opportunities for increased resilience of pastoral and nomadic groups, taking into account the realities of contemporary pastoralism.

We will then hear from ECOWAS and other representatives of the broader region, their perspectives on opportunities and challenges for prevention and peaceful resolution of transhumance-related conflicts, in line with relevant regional policies.

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CLOSING REMARKS

Excellencies,

Today's focus on opportunities and challenges related to transhumance is a demonstration of the unique role of the joint ECOSOC-PBC session as an important platform to provide expert guidance and international support to nationally owned and regionally backed peacebuilding initiatives.

Following the **restructuring of the peace and security and the development pillars**, further bolstered by the Secretary-General's call for a "surge in diplomacy for peace", the United Nations is better placed to fulfil its central role in helping to prevent and resolve conflicts, reduce large-scale human suffering, and promote sustainable development. In doing so, it is important to consider not only the security dimension of peacebuilding but also its economic and social dimensions. In this context, ECOSOC and the PBC will continue to support efforts that aim to promote coordination of partners and policy coherence for sustainable peace and development, not only in West Africa and the Sahel, but also in other respective countries and regions in accordance with respective mandates.

Stronger synergies between ECOSOC and the PBC, in view of the convening and bridging role of the latter, will help ensure that PBC work is based on long-term and holistic peacebuilding perspectives, with a focus on addressing the root causes of conflict. As manifested in today's meeting, PBC is committed to **engaging societies** beyond political elites, and bringing into relevant discussions the perspectives and deep knowledge of local communities and peoples on socio-economic, environmental and structural aspects of peacebuilding.

I would like to conclude by affirming that ECOSOC and the PBC 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.

I thank you.