

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Agenda: Alleviating the Social Instability of Burkina Faso

## **I. Committee Introduction**

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established on 26 June 1945, aims to “advance the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental.” ECOSOC is one of the six main organs of the United Nations that cooperates with the international community to promote improved living standards such as socioeconomic status, health, human rights and more. It has a rotating membership of 54 nations, as well as partnerships with academics, businesses, and non-governmental organizations.

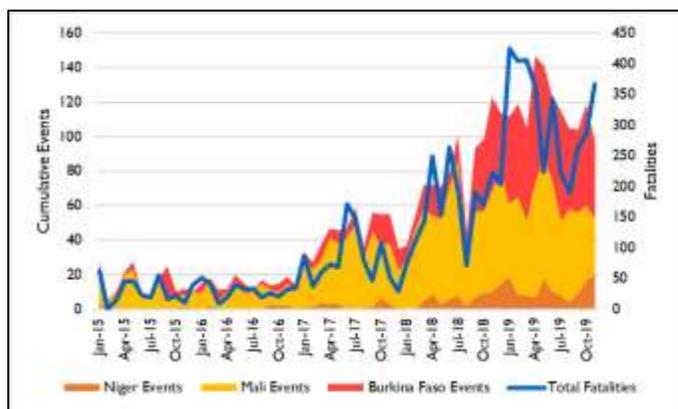
The annual High-Level Political Forum brings together nations, international/regional organizations, private sectors, and other stakeholders to address issues and identify solutions regarding the Sustainable Development Goals. The Integration Segment, Humanitarian Affairs Segment, Operational Activities for Development Segment, and Management Segment help the smooth functioning of this committee. ECOSOC enhances cooperation within multiple stakeholders through the Partnership Forum and offers a chance for youth to get involved on global issues through the Youth Forum.

In 2021, ECOSOC held multiple forums and meetings to seek resolutions on economic and social issues around the globe. Meetings were guided by the overall theme of ECOSOC 2021: “sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.” The Forum on Financing for Development Follow-Up, Special Meeting on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation as well as forums mentioned above were held this year. More sessions, including the High-Level Political Forum, are scheduled to be held in the upcoming months.

## **II. Agenda Introduction**

Burkina Faso has had a rise in tension and violence over the last few years. The Central Sahel region, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, are facing attacks from Islamist armed groups, which aims to gain influence and territorial control of the region. The Central Sahel is recognized for assisting the expansion of Islamist armed groups associated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. These groups attacked civilian infrastructures such as places of worship, health centers, and schools. In response, the Sahelian security forces retaliated, thus the brutal war crimes occurred simultaneously.

The escalating violence forced people to leave their homes behind. Now, Burkina Faso is one of the fastest-growing displacement crises, or forced movement away from one's home region, in the world: over one million people have had to flee their homes. Nearly 300 local health centers are closed, limiting the health care that 1.1 million people can access. As many as 350,000 children were forced out of schools since the armed groups proceeded to attack schools.



An unstable economy has also contributed to the social instability of the nation. 40.1% of its population lives below the poverty line and is ranked 144th among 157 nations on the new capital index, published by the World Bank. In response, the Burkina Faso government adopted the National Plan For Economic and Social Development, focusing on structurally transforming the economy to achieve sustainable, resilient, inclusive growth. Further, an IMF program was approved to satisfy basic needs and restore fiscal soundness. These policies allowed Burkina Faso's economy to resume positive growth to an increase of 3% in GDP over the course of 2 years, but the country's fragile security put these gains at risk. With the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.6 million are at risk of famine.

### III. Definition of Key Terms

#### *Social Instability*

Social Instability is an uncertainty that is caused by the possibility of sudden change in society. Strikes, demonstrations and other types of civil unrest can be examples of this term. The majority of social instability is caused by economic disparity and political volatility. Burkina Faso is experiencing a major social instability due to conflicts between armed groups, terrorism, and poverty. Enraged by the devastating situation, thousands of citizens took to the streets of Burkina Faso, demanding the government for a stronger response to rising bloodshed after massacres directed towards civilians.

#### *Displacement*

Displacement is a situation in which people are forced to leave the place where they normally live. Displaced persons are likely to be exposed in dangerous situations such as exploitation and abuse. In the case of Burkina Faso, millions of people are displaced, and are affected by poverty, lack of access to basic services, and more. Roughly 45% of the population live below the poverty line and educational enrollment

is disproportionately low. Thus, it ranks 185th among 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), a measure of a population's quality of life based on education, health, and economic capabilities. Devising measures to assist these displaced people would be the main issue of this agenda.

### *Central Sahel Region*

The Central Sahel region is an area in the midst of the African continent, having a semi-arid climate. It includes Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. About 20 million people are estimated to live in this region, though 2.4 million people are in need of food assistance. In September 2020, the World Food Programme declared the Central Sahel a highest grade of Level 3 emergency. Civilians across the Central Sahel are exposed to violence from armed forces, with almost 7,000 killed just in 2020 alone. Extreme weather contributes to the urgent situation in this region as well.



### *Famine*

Famine is a situation in which there is not enough food for a greater number of people, causing illness and death. It is considered a famine when more than 20% of households cannot eat, acute malnutrition exceeds 30%, and death rates are higher than 2 per 10,000 people. Conflicts, severe weather events, lack of trade, insecurity and chronic poverty are factors that stimulate this situation. Burkina Faso is known for being one of the poorest countries in the world, according to the World Bank. Even worse, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed 1.6 million people to danger at the risk of famine.

## **IV. Past Actions**

### *UN Security Council*

The UN Security Council (UNSC) imposed sanctions toward eight individuals in Mali for hindering the peace process and violating human rights, including recruiting child soldiers and attacking UN personnel. On June 29 2020, the UNSC renewed the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali(MINUSMA)'s mandate for an additional year. MINUSMA supported

national political dialogue and reconciliation, as well as ensuring security of civilians. The UNSC issued a Presidential Statement on February 3, 2021 that emphasized the need for a holistic approach to address violence in the region.

#### *International Criminal Court*

In January 2013, the International Criminal Court (ICC) launched an investigation into alleged crimes committed on the territory of Mali. With joint efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), ICC was able to have justice play its part to stop the violence and restore peace in the region. In August 2017, former Ansar Dine leader Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi was sentenced for the war crime of partially destroying the World Heritage Site at Timbuktu.

#### *Operation Barkhane*

Operation Barkhane is a leading counterterrorism operation in Central Sahel. In July 2017, the G5 Sahel Joint Force was established by troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The G5 Sahel countries and France launched the International Coalition for the Sahel to coordinate responses to security, political and development issues in the region. In July 2020, a counterterrorism force composed of special forces from European Union (EU) countries supplemented Operation Barkhane.

#### *Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA)*

Burkina Faso is a member of the Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), a Financial Action Task Force body that is part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Part of GIABA's mission in Burkina Faso is to prevent terrorist financing. Burkina Faso published a Mutual Evaluation Report to address key findings and recommended actions to be taken in order to prevent terrorist financing. Furthermore, Burkina Faso has taken measures to close economic regulatory gaps and to hold discussions with the public to better understand how terrorism and other illicit activities, such as discrimination of minorities, benefit off the economy.

#### *Ministerial Roundtable on the Central Sahel*

The Government of Denmark, Germany, the European Union and the United Nations hosted a meeting on October 20, 2020, to address plans regarding humanitarian action, development and peace efforts, and the impact and consequences of COVID-19. The main solution of this event was to support local communities to participate actively for social cohesion. Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) or UN-affiliated organizations may cooperate with local institutions to efficiently carry out any development aid programs specialized to the region. These measures should take integrated approaches including environmental, gender and livelihood opportunities.

### *World Bank*

The World Bank confirmed Burkina Faso's eligibility for the Prevention and Resilience Allocation. It provides enhanced support for countries at risk of falling into high-intensity conflict or large-scale violence, based on government commitment. It has made the Sahel Region a priority for the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's fund for the poorest. This fund provides loans, or "credits", and grants for programs that boost economic growth, reduce inequalities, and improve people's living conditions. An Emergency Budget Support Operation, a support program that grants \$100 million, will help relieve the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of the Burkinabe people and lay the foundation for a resilient economic recovery. The Emergency Territorial Development and Resilience Project supplies physical infrastructures and services and aims to improve essential services for all citizens of Burkina Faso.

## **V. Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies**

### *United States*

The United States had shown little interest in Burkina Faso for the last few decades, however after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States started pouring money into the nations of West Africa through various military assistance efforts such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. Terrorists associated with Al Qaeda and Islamic State have presided in "weak states" to practice extremist activities. Thus, the United States designed programs to counter violent extremism and aims to promote democratization and human rights in Burkina Faso, thus a series of development programs are being carried out. For example, the Agency for International Development (USAID) founded the Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) initiative that cooperates with humanitarian professionals and local organizations, to assist households to recover from shocks by increasing exposure to financial resources as well as access to markets, infrastructure and services.

### *France*

France had been willing to support Burkina Faso in its resilience building. Furthermore, "France is determined to continue to accompany Burkina Faso in the field of security and in its economic and social development policy," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in a support visit to President

Kaboré in January 2021. However, France plans on reducing the number of military troops present in the region. President Macron said in a newspaper interview that France would not support countries where there was no democratic legitimacy or transition, and that France had no intention of keeping its troops in Africa forever. The withdrawal of French troops will be a difficult test for the Sahel states, since the regional armies have depended on the strategies of Operation Barkhane and the French troops for their performance.

#### *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*

The UN Refugee Agency believes that a forced displacement, or a crisis, is growing; thus the international community should hold a sense of urgency. In response to the European Union's concerns regarding population movements towards its borders, UNHCR requests the EU to intervene in a strategic, unified, substantial manner in order to stop this condition. Finally, UNHCR emphasizes that security must be closely associated with humanitarian and development action; otherwise threats to humanitarian workers in that region would be prevalent. Humanitarian action can support peace and reconciliation, on the other hand, political and military action is needed to end human suffering in turn. According to briefing notes of the commission written in July 2021, UNHCR is "ready to assist those newly displaced and to support the authorities and host communities on the frontlines of the response."

#### *International Rescue Committee*

The International Rescue Committee calls upon international actors to focus on responding to the basic needs of the population by increasing humanitarian access, rather than a heavily militarized response. An over-militarized approach to a complex humanitarian crisis, alongside underfunding of the response, fails to address the root causes of the conflict, which jeopardizes the humanitarian response. It suggests donors and UN member states to re-balance their investments with greater prioritization of the humanitarian response to provide access to basic services.

## **VI. Conclusion and Suggested Solutions**

Burkina Faso, used to be known as one of the most stable countries in the West African region according to the Political Stability Index released by the World Bank, is experiencing a series of social and economic crises within the past few years. Attacks from Islamist armed groups and state security forces are putting the inhabitants in danger. Over one million people were displaced, nearly 300 local health centers were closed, 350,000 children were forced out of schools, and 1.6 million are at risk of famine. Even with the international community's continued support, this condition does not seem to recover at all, rather it is deteriorating.

The Economic and Social Council must devise measures to settle the socioeconomic instability both in the short and long term. First, fulfilling humanitarian needs of the civilians present in that region is the foremost priority over all. Utilizing organizations such as the World Food Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will help aid the condition of famine and displacement. Along with this, the international community will have to cooperate with one another to alleviate the economic crisis worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mediating the relationship between terrorist forces and the Burkina Faso government would be another solution to restore peace and security. To preserve socioeconomic stability, a sustainable development assisted by the United Nations Development Programme will take integrated approaches to advance the development in terms of economic, social and environmental aspects. This committee should provide the region's most vulnerable a chance to break the vicious cycle of crisis and lessen the need for humanitarian aid in the future.

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