On 1 October, Nigeria celebrated its 57th Independence Day. On this occasion, President Buhari, present after his long absence this summer because of poor health, paid tribute to the country’s military in Maiduguri and commended the military’s efforts fighting Boko Haram in the country’s northeast. In his 2017 State of the Nation Address, Buhari evaluated the government’s actions over the past two years. Nigeria’s three top priorities remain security, economic recovery and the fight against corruption. “The country must first be secured,” said President Buhari. “The economy must be re-balanced so that we do not depend on oil alone. We must fight corruption, which is Nigeria’s number one enemy. Our administration is tackling these tasks in earnest.”

Targeted air strikes destroyed Boko Haram insurgents’ logistical bases and routes; a naval force is currently being established in the Lake Chad basin; and President Buhari intends to beef up Nigeria’s military operation Lafiya Dole (“peace by all means”), which will be composed of mobile strike teams to “ensure the final push to wipe out the remnants of Boko Haram.” However, the humanitarian and food situation remains critical in northeastern Nigeria, an area that hosts 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and an estimated 4.7 million food insecure people. A recent report published by Amnesty International estimates that Boko Haram killed at least 400 people since April 2017. President Buhari also announced a new presidential initiative aimed at creating 10,000 jobs for the unemployed youth, with support from the CBN’s development finance initiatives. He indicated that there has been substantial progress in the agricultural sector. In response to separatist movements in the Niger Delta, President Buhari called for national unity and dialogue with stakeholders to keep the peace. “I am very disappointed that responsible leaders of [these] communities do not warn their hot-headed youths what the country went through. […] The government is grateful to the responsible leadership of those communities and will pursue lasting peace in the Niger Delta,” he declared. Nigeria's Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo released a list of the presidential administration’s 57 achievements including the release of 106 abducted Chibok girls, the arrest of 16,000 Boko Haram members and the fight against the insurgency.
CSAO, CSFRS: SYMPOSIUM ON THE FUTURE OF THE SAHEL

The Sahel is at the heart of African and global concerns. No single stakeholder can tackle the complex security and development challenges facing the region; governments, regional organisations, the international community, civil society and researchers must join forces, and, in particular, forge stronger connections between research and policy-making. In support of this effort, the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) hosted the French Higher Council for Strategic Training and Research (CSFRS) on 29 September in Paris for a symposium on Sahel-Sahara regional issues. Two CSFRS reports formed the basis for discussion. “Prospective study of Sahelian realities 2030” proposes four possible scenarios for the Sahel based upon a selection of economic, social, political and security criteria. “Bringing the desert together: How to advance Sahelo-Maghreb integration” from the European Council on Foreign Relations advocates for a more holistic approach to regional integration between North Africa and the Sahel. Some 50 participants from the region, international partners and international organisations participated in the informal discussions and shared their insights with policymakers. The SWAC Secretariat will continue to be a space for policy dialogues for its members and Sahel experts.

PRIDEC: LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT IN COASTAL COUNTRIES

The fourth high-level meeting on “Peaceful transhumance and livestock mobility in the Sahel and West African coastal countries” was held by ECOWAS from 27-29 September 2017 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. Livestock ministers from across the region endorsed the funding modalities to establish the Regional Investment Programme for Livestock Development in Coastal Countries (PRIDEC), targeting the livestock sector of five coastal countries (Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo). PRIDEC is designed to complement the Regional Support Project for Pastoralism in the Sahel (PRAPS), which was established with the support of the World Bank, and covers six Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal). The livestock sector is 15% of the GDP of Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger. Transhumance also plays a role in developing and stabilising vast areas of the Sahel. However, the Sahelian livestock sector cannot evolve in isolation and must be linked to the coasts. A cross-border transhumance axis must be seen as a “community public good.” Governments and their partners must thus strengthen structural investments in order to make functional infrastructure and facilities to support pastoralism and cross-border transhumance. They also need to consolidate policies and social dialogues on livestock and the governance of agro-pastoral resources at local, national and regional levels. PRIDEC aims to promote greater policy coherence and efficiency in operational implementation. Participants discussed national components of the programme and co-ordination mechanisms at the regional level. They recommended launching a mapping study to localise the many programmes and initiatives already underway. They called upon ECOWAS to provide strong leadership and revitalise the ECOWAS task force on livestock and pastoralism in order to develop a clear long-term vision for how the livestock sector in the ECOWAS area should develop and the role of transhumance within that development. The event was hosted by the Ivoirian Ministry of Animal and Water Resources and organised with the support of the Billital Maroobé Network (RBM), a regional network of livestock farmers’ associations aimed at promoting pastoralism at the national and regional levels. It also benefitted from the support of CILSS, The Rural Hub, the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) and many other partners. The fifth regional meeting is scheduled to take place in September 2018 in Bamako, Mali.
ECOWAS aims to harmonise education systems

ECOWAS intends to move towards stronger alignment of regional education systems and support the mutual recognition of diplomas and certificates from institutions within the region. Following an experts meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, education ministers endorsed a series of recommendations during a high-level meeting on 28-29 September in Lomé, Togo. They validated the ECOWAS Technical and Vocational Education Training Strategy for Skills Improvement and Employability (ETSSIE) and urged member states to continue to support and take ownership of the ECOWAS Nnamdi Azikiwe Academy Mobility Scheme (ENAAMS). The scheme aims to develop an academic mobility system for students and teachers (including those from the diaspora) and encourage institutions to put in place language immersion programmes to promote student and teacher mobility in the region. The scheme is named after Nigeria’s first president who was a journalist by training. The meeting was opened by the Togolese Minister of Higher Education and Research Octave Nicoué K. Broohm. ECOWAS Commissioner Hamidou Boly recalled that education is a vector of socio-economic and cultural development in the ECOWAS area. “We must move from physical and mineral resources to human capital,” he declared.

UEMOA strengthens its think tank

At the initiative of the UEMOA Commission and several West African research institutes, researchers from the eight UEMOA member countries gathered from 25-28 September in Dakar. They brainstormed together on how to better integrate West African expertise into policymaking. The three-day workshop covered several themes. A special focus was placed on food security and how to improve smallholder farmers’ access to seeds and inputs, how to improve intra-community agricultural trade, and how to generate jobs for the youth. The “UEMOA Think Tank” aims to foster collaboration and exchange between research institutions of the UEMOA area; to encourage the production, assimilation and sharing of knowledge on community issues; and to provide input to UEMOA Commission to help it make decisions. The think tank was launched in May 2016 and connects some 20 research institutes.

ECOWAS Commission president de Souza at the UN

ECOWAS Commission President Alain Marcel de Souza met with the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, in New York on 26 September. Their meeting focused on the security situation in West Africa, notably the political crisis in Guinea-Bissau, on-going tensions in Togo and the unstable situation in northern Mali. “We must work towards achieving peace in Mali,” declared the ECOWAS Commission president. Guterres and de Souza commended the G5-Sahel initiative and acknowledged the benefits of joining together community forces in order to establish peace in Mali and the Sahel region. They also discussed the UN’s support in improving regional health conditions and the modalities for the transfer of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) radio to ECOWAS.
**PUBLICATION: WARS AND CONFLICTS IN THE SAHARA-SAHEL**

The Sahel and the Sahara are facing exceptional political instability involving a combination of rebellions, jihadist insurgencies, coups d’état, protest movements and illegal trafficking. The backdrop to this accumulated violence is a globalised security environment, which blurs the traditional lines between what is local and global, military and civilian, domestic and international, political and cultural. The purpose of this paper is to analyse these patterns of violence. The first section presents the geographic distribution and development over time of the main sources of violence in North Africa and West Africa before examining the events behind the increase in political violence in the Sahel and the Sahara. The second section analyses the patterns of violence, and focuses on the geographic scale of this violence as well as the strategies of the warring parties. In its conclusion, the paper highlights the need to strengthen regional cooperation, restore the legitimacy of governments, and establish inclusive governance solutions in conflict zones.

**PUBLICATION: AGRICULTURAL MARKET ACTIVITY AND BOKO HARAM ATTACKS IN NORTHEASTERN NIGERIA**

This paper examines the linkages between Boko Haram activities in northeastern Nigeria and declined activities in regional agricultural markets. Building on data from both the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the paper first considers the geographic distribution of Boko Haram events with respect to market towns and discusses whether there is evidence of Boko Haram activities near markets having influence on declined market operations. Next, it examines the temporal character of market operations and the timing of their changes in their operational status, including market closures, with respect to the seasonality of agricultural production and land use in northeastern Nigeria. The paper measures the frequency of changes in regional market activities and considers spatial relationships and temporal correlations with Boko Haram activities in the region over twelve periods from late 2014 through the end of 2016. Finally, the paper formulates policy recommendations for assessing and mitigating coupled challenges of human and environmental security.

**WHO’S WHO: MOHAMED ABDELLAHI EBBE, DIRECTOR-GENERAL, CILSS SAHEL INSTITUTE**

Mohamed Abdellahi Ebbe, a locust specialist, was appointed in May 2017 as Director-General of the CILSS Sahel Institute. Born in Nouakchott, Mauritania in 1964, Dr. Ebbe is an agricultural engineer and locust expert.

He graduated as an agricultural engineer focusing on plant protection from the Abu Ghraib Institute of Agricultural Technology in Baghdad, Iraq. He then continued his training at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in France where he obtained a doctorate in life and earth sciences. His thesis, *Desert Locust Biogeography in Mauritania*, was published in 2010. Mohamed Abdellahi Ebbe has more than 30 years of experience in locust control and environmental protection. From 1993-1995, he was national co-ordinator of desert locust control at the Central Operations Command during an infestation. He subsequently worked as a project co-ordinator or consultant for numerous bi- and multilateral programmes, including the FAO, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. He gained solid experience in supporting rural development and resilience of agro-pastoralist populations, particularly through the African Desert Locust Emergency Preparedness Project, (2006). He has been the Director-General of Mauritania’s National Centre for Desert Locust Control (CNLA) since 2006. In 2013, 2015 and 2016, he was also Mauritania’s national co-ordinator of a programme to fight against the malaria, dengue fever and Rift Valley fever vector – the mosquito. He is a member of the board of directors of the National Office of Meteorology in Mauritania. Dr. Ebbe teaches at the University of Nouakchott in the department of environmental biology. He participated in a large number of research projects and published numerous scientific studies. Dr. Ebbe also participates regularly in the supervision of dissertations and theses of students of diverse origin. Dr. Ebbe was awarded a medal of honour as a Chevalier de l’Ordre du mérite (National Order of Merit) in 2007 in Mauritania. He was also awarded a medal by the FAO on the occasion of World Food Day in 2010 and received the Sir Boris Uvarov Award for Applied Acridology in 2005.