The 73rd session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) convened leaders from across the globe for two weeks of debate in New York. “Making the UN relevant to all people: Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies,” was the official theme of the summit. The general debate opened on 25 September, following the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit that marked the centenary of Nelson Mandela’s birth. World leaders discussed a large number of urgent issues such as financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, climate action and international peacekeeping.

Adama Barrow, president of Gambia, delivered a statement during the official opening session, commending the importance of multilateral co-operation. Gambia fully supports the implementation of the new UN Support Plan for the Sahel. “We are particularly excited that the new strategy views the Sahel as a land of opportunities, and not one of hopelessness,” Barrow said. President Akufo-Addo of Ghana declared, “We should accept that this organisation must change to suit contemporary needs...Do we want an organisation that ensures shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies? Or should it remain the place to pass resolutions that are ignored with impunity?” Sierra Leone’s President Julius Maada Bio addressed the issue of African representation on the UN Security Council. Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari recalled some of the external threats to peace in West Africa. Nigeria and Norway hosted a side-event to explore how the rise of illegal financial flows affects the development agenda. During another side-event, co-hosted by Ghana and Sierra Leone, development partners announced a major push to invest in “data to end hunger.” They launched the “50 X 2030” initiative to conduct regular surveys of farming households in 50 low- and lower-middle-income countries, including 30 African countries. The initiative aims to inform decision-making and thereby increase agricultural productivity in a sustainable way.
Luxembourg is one of the most generous providers of aid. It spends about 1% of its gross national income on official development assistance (ODA), far above the UN target of 0.7%. Capitalising on its achievements and its work with fragile states, it has approved a new general development co-operation strategy entitled, “The road to 2030.” The Agenda 2030’s principle of “leaving no one behind” and the commitments set out in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development are both at the heart of the new strategy. Luxembourg maintains a strong geographic focus on West Africa, especially the Sahel region. Five out of seven priority countries are in West Africa, including Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Mali, Niger and Senegal. It aims to allocate at least 50% of its bilateral funding resources to priority partner countries. Luxembourg also plans to further develop regional approaches on development co-operation in thematic areas where it has strong added value. Luxembourg is a member of the Sahel and West Africa Club where it is working, together with like-minded members, towards the goal of regional integration. In terms of thematic focus, the new strategy identifies four inter-related thematic priorities: 1) improving access to quality basic social services; 2) enhancing socio-economic integration of women and youth; 3) promoting inclusive and sustainable growth; and 4) strengthening inclusive governance. Luxembourg is committed to supporting more effective donor co-ordination, enhancing policy coherence for development and leveraging multi-stakeholder partnerships. A results-based action-plan will now be developed to determine how Luxembourg’s development co-operation will contribute to the strategy’s implementation over the next five years.

Food security experts met from 12-14 September in Lomé to analyse the ongoing agro-pastoral campaign and harvest forecasts for 2019 in the Sahel and West Africa. With the exception of central and western areas of the Sahel, the food production forecast is overall average or good. The rainy season started early in the central and eastern parts of the Sahel and late in the western areas, notably Cabo Verde, Mauritania and Senegal. The total rainfall until end of August was higher than average levels overall. If there is no major pest or another unexpected shock, grain production is estimated at about 66-73 million tonnes. This would be a 10-20% increase compared to the five-year average, thus much faster than the average population growth. Fodder supply for livestock breeding remains a concern in northern Senegal, Mauritania, central Mali and western Niger. Despite various food assistance interventions, the global acute malnutrition rates are above the 10-15% thresholds in some areas of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Civil insecurity in the Lake Chad basin, northern and central Mali and the Liptako-Gourma region remains the key threat to food and nutrition security in the region. Food security stakeholders are conducting a joint mission to assess the food and nutrition situation. However, four countries -- Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone -- have not been able to conduct continuous agricultural surveys due to financial constraints. Nevertheless, all countries in the region participated in this year’s Cadre harmonisé analysis cycle to identify vulnerable areas and ensure timely response interventions. The next PREGEC meeting, conducted within the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), will take stock of the food and nutrition situation. Meanwhile, experts made a series of recommendations to governments, CILSS and development partners.

The G5 Sahel Security College was inaugurated on 16 September in Bamako during a meeting chaired by Salif Traoré, the Malian minister in charge of internal security and civic protection. The college aims to train security forces and build a network of people involved in security activities, including police agents, judges, religious authorities and civil society leaders. It has created technical trainings to analyse the ongoing agro-pastoral campaign and harvest forecasts for 2019 in the Sahel and West Africa. With the exception of central and western areas of the Sahel, the food production forecast is overall average or good. The rainy season started early in the central and eastern parts of the Sahel and late in the western areas, notably Cabo Verde, Mauritania and Senegal. The total rainfall until end of August was higher than average levels overall. If there is no major pest or another unexpected shock, grain production is estimated at about 66-73 million tonnes. This would be a 10-20% increase compared to the five-year average, thus much faster than the average population growth. Fodder supply for livestock breeding remains a concern in northern Senegal, Mauritania, central Mali and western Niger. Despite various food assistance interventions, the global acute malnutrition rates are above the 10-15% thresholds in some areas of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Civil insecurity in the Lake Chad basin, northern and central Mali and the Liptako-Gourma region remains the key threat to food and nutrition security in the region. Food security stakeholders are conducting a joint mission to assess the food and nutrition situation. However, four countries -- Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone -- have not been able to conduct continuous agricultural surveys due to financial constraints. Nevertheless, all countries in the region participated in this year’s Cadre harmonisé analysis cycle to identify vulnerable areas and ensure timely response interventions. The next PREGEC meeting, conducted within the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), will take stock of the food and nutrition situation. Meanwhile, experts made a series of recommendations to governments, CILSS and development partners.

1) Knowledge-sharing – How can the G5 Sahel conduct trainings that contribute to building a Sahelian vision of security issues while capitalising and sharing existing competences of our region? 2) Enabling environment – How can the G5 Sahel create an environment that encourages the application/replication of recommendations and best practices in the region? 3) Financing – How to ensure sustainable financing for the college? The average cost of a training is between EUR 60 000-80 000 per month. The college benefits from EUR 7 million financial support from the European Union. It is also supported by other development partners such as Belgium, France, Germany and Spain.
Promoting good governance rather than economic development could be even more effective in providing West Africans with the hope that they can live fulfilling lives in their own countries of origin. This was a key message from the SWAC/OECD webinar, “Identifying the factors driving West African migration”, which took place on 27 September. The online debate looked at the findings in a recent West Africa Paper. Some 90 participants from across West Africa, Europe and North America, including many partner institutions, participated in the debate. The key note presentation was delivered by Jessica Anderson from the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University. She highlighted some key drivers of migration in West Africa, notably the lack of trust in democratic institutions and police services. Panel remarks were made by Nelly Robin, from the French Institute for Development (IRD) and Claudia Natali, from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Participants also highlighted the importance of recognising the growing threat of climate change in influencing the decisions of migrants to flee and understanding the different motivations between urban and rural migrants. Developing research on migration to better explain drivers behind the decisions of aspiring migrants will be essential for addressing future migration patterns. Importantly, a balanced mix of policy responses by governments and development stakeholders is critical in resolving this complex regional challenge.

**MUST READ**

**IMPACT OF FISCAL AND SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES IN TOGO**

Fiscal policies may reduce inequalities in Togo, but they impoverish the poorest households. These key findings come from a new OECD study on the impact of fiscal and social protection policies on inequalities and poverty in that country. The study estimates the redistributive impact of tax revenues and tax expenditures through monetary, non-monetary transfers and subsidies, on household incomes and inequalities. Despite improvements in the level of education and an increase in life expectancy, the challenges in terms of poverty and inequality remain very important.

**MAKING CONFLICT PREVENTION THE RULE, NOT THE EXCEPTION**

It remains a key challenge of conflict prevention systems to make early warnings operational. This study focuses on a literature review and a series of interviews conducted in Cotonou, Lomé and Abuja in March and June 2018, to examine conflict prevention and early warnings. It examines how the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) contributes to conflict prevention in West Africa, and underscores its persistent gap between early warnings and timely responses. ECOWARN might be the best-developed early warning system on the African continent and it is important to understand its strengths and weaknesses. Beyond the technical, financial and institutional difficulties, the early warning deficits and response times, which are often too long, the key problems result from a culture of prevention that is still very “theoretical.” This study offers food for thought and proposes some actions to allow for a better operationalisation of early warning systems. The recently signed co-operation agreement between UEMOA and ECOWAS is a positive step towards building synergy between different early warning systems.

**OPINION : WHAT HOPE FOR PEACE IN MALI?**

Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta won the run-off election on 16 August and will now start a second term. Against a backdrop of violence, crisis and instability, can President Keïta bring about the changes needed for a lasting peace? This opinion piece from the SWAC/OECD Secretariat suggests that the government should refocus its attention on northern Mali to make it once again a central and shared space that is more than just the “north of Mali. “The aim should be to develop economic co-operation with North Africa, increase trade and interaction and build a common future. Mali’s northern regions would then no longer be on the margins of African economic development, but play a strategic geographic and economic role as vital nodes in a vibrant regional network stretching between Lagos and Algiers.”
WHO’S WHO: KAMISSA CAMARA, MALIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER

In September 2018, Kamissa Camara has become Mali’s youngest foreign minister and the first woman to hold the post. One year ago, Camara wrote an open letter to President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) to ask him to withdraw his plans to change the constitution. In July 2018, she became his diplomatic advisor and, shortly after his re-election, IBK appointed her as his foreign affairs minister. She is now one of 11 women — out of 32 ministers total — in Mali’s new cabinet. Camara says she aims to build political bridges with Africa. “My mantra is to enrich foreign policy with African accents. As an American woman who was born and raised in France by West African parents, I strive to provide analyses that highlight religious and cultural specificities. Politics, democracy, security and good governance are the essence of my work, reflections and publications”, she declares on her website. A fellow with the Center for African Studies at Harvard University and with Foreign Policy Interrupted, and founder and co-chair of the Sahel Strategy Forum, Camara gained reputation as guest speaker on Africa-focused panels with the U.S. Congress as well as with think tanks and universities in America, France and Africa. She previously worked as sub-Saharan Africa Director at PartnersGlobal and as Senior Program Officer for West & Central Africa at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). She also worked for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) where she was in charge of managing electoral assistance programs in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. Camara holds a master’s degree in international economics and development from the University Pierre Mendès in France and a bachelor’s in applied foreign languages, specialising in international relations, from the Denis Diderot University.

West Africa is undergoing a nutritional transition which has been triggered by a rapidly urbanising population with changing dietary habits and decreasing levels of physical activity. While the prevalence of overweight and obese adults has rapidly grown in all countries, there are significant differences between rural and urban areas. In Niger, for example, obesity prevalence is 13% in urban areas and 1% in rural areas. Overweight and obesity are occurring most rapidly in conjunction to accelerated economic growth translating into higher living standards and sedentary lifestyle. One in two Ghanian urban dwellers is already either overweight or obese. Overall, overweight and obesity issues in urban areas are almost as significant as for undernutrition, highlighting the increasing challenge from the double burden of malnutrition that these city areas face. These findings call for greater research efforts to identify more appropriate metrics to monitor food and nutrition security in urban areas.