



14TH STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS)



PREAMBLE

Renewing Commitments to Position UNISS as an Integrated Framework for Achieving Peace, Development, and Prosperity for the Sahel.

Dakar, 16 February 2023 – The 14th Steering Committee meeting of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) was held in Dakar, Senegal on 16 February to take stock of progress made in the implementation of UNISS and, to provide new orientations to promote stability and prosperity in the Sahel region. The meeting was attended by Resident Coordinators of the ten UNISS countries as well as Regional Directors and Heads of United Nations Agencies, Funds, and Programmes as well as Offices in the Sahel and the Technical Focal Points of the three UNISS pillars.

01

Ms. Giovannie Biha, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director for the Regional Bureau for Africa co-chaired the meeting in conjunction with Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, the UN Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel.

02

The meeting benefitted from the attendance of Dr. Matshidiso Rebecca Moeti, the Director for Africa of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Ms. Emanuella del Rey, the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel and Dr. Yacoub El Hillo, the Director for Africa of the United Nations Development Coordination Office. Guest speakers included Dr. Alioune Sall Director of the Africa Futures Institute based in South Africa, Professor Bakary Sambe, Director of the Timbuktu Institute. The meeting welcomed Ms. Lila Pieters and Ms. Aminata Maiga as new Resident Coordinators of the UN Systems in Mauritania and Senegal respectively to the UNISS Steering Committee.

03

A special session of the 14th Steering Committee titled: “Deep Dive on Water as an Accelerator of Development” took place on 15th February in Dakar with the objective to articulate perspectives to draw attention to the centrality of water as a driver of prosperity and stability in the Sahel.

04

The objective of the 14th Steering Committee was to take stock of UNISS implementation and, to reflect on its strategic positioning within the current geopolitical, socio-economic, and humanitarian context of the Sahel. It also included the need to interrogate perspectives and agree on actionable plans to further accelerate UNISS implementation.

05

The meeting dedicated a session to discuss the current geopolitical, socioeconomic, development and security context of the Sahel against the backdrop of global polarization as a result of the Ukraine War.

06

The 14th Steering Committee reviewed the implementation of the UNISS Road Map of 2022-2023, reflected on ways to strengthen partnerships required to intensify UNISS implementation and discussed resource mobilization. It examined the intersection of UNISS in support of the work of United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in an effort to enhance the mainstreaming UNISS into regional and country level frameworks in coordination with the Development Coordination Office (DCO).

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the impact of the Current Geopolitics on the Implementation of UNISS:

The meeting welcomed the discussions on the impact of geopolitics in the Sahel and called for the continued implementation of the recommendations of the 13th Steering Committee, including the completion of the study on the “Impact of Geopolitics on Peace and Prosperity in the Sahel” earlier recommended by the Committee in Dakar in 2021.

The meeting reaffirmed the important mandate of the UN in addressing conflicts and instability and extended full support to the UN Multidimensional and Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and called for immediate measures to protect civilians, including children in conflict situations.

The UN to embrace policy flexibility, agility, enhanced organizational coordination and leadership in order to adapt to, and address multiple challenges related to the evolving geopolitical context as well as heed early warning and deploy preventive tools.

The meeting urged UNISS partners to step up analysis and advocacy on issues of strategic interest to the UN in the region such as good governance, regional security architecture, access to safe education in conflict zones, and the management of farmer herder dynamics including cross-border issues. In response to the geopolitical tensions, the UN should rethink its organic positioning and enhance engagements with key stakeholders including by the UN Secretary-General. The UN should leverage its unparalleled multilateralism to navigate complex geopolitical tensions and find solutions to the Sahelian challenges.

In order to project a stronger UN role, and to facilitate the implementation of its political and programmatic mandates while asserting its unique identity and neutrality position in the face of geopolitical tensions in the Sahel, the UN should step up its political mediation and good offices roles by taking advantage of its convening power in the region.

The meeting FURTHER recognized that Sahelian States have become more vulnerable to organized crime, including illicit financial flows, terrorism and corruption, and recommended that UNISS should be leveraged to adequately to strengthen Criminal Justice Systems across the Sahel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On Enhancing the Implementation of UNISS

The 14th Steering Committee underlined the importance of healthcare for the socioeconomic development of the region and identified the urgent need to ensure that children, women, youth and peripheral communities are placed at the centre of UNISS interventions.

The meeting recognized the criticality of gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development, peace and stability and welcomed efforts to build gender equality across all UNISS pillars while ensuring greater investments for women. The Committee called for more efforts to implement the UN Youth Strategy and to accelerate Priority Six of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel (UNSP) on women and youth.

The meeting called for the prioritization of cross-border actions and to promote the creation of regional discussion groups to identify trends and share lessons to solve common challenges. It called on UNCTs to also take stock of and address multidimensional cross-border issues, thus fostering the concept of "UNCTs without borders". The meeting also advocated for the increased involvement of private sector actors in addressing challenges in the region.

The meeting welcomed the finalization of UNISS Programmatic Offers on Peace and Security, Governance, Resilient Social Services, and Renewable Energy as well as the establishment of a UNISS Project Bank and called for resource mobilization towards their implementation. It also took note of efforts made to enhance monitoring and evaluation of initiatives under the UNISS framework and encouraged agencies, funds, and programmes to identify focal persons to feed reporting and impact assessment mechanisms in coordination with the DCO.

The Committee recommended the mainstreaming of UNISS INTO national development plans, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, Country Programs including sub-regional frameworks such as those of the AU, ECOWAS, the G5 Sahel, the LCBC and LGA employing the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus approach.

The Steering Committee recognized the importance of supporting implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) especially for Sahelian countries and noted that cross-border trade and the free movement of persons have a bearing on social cohesion, security, and sustainable development of local communities. Recognizing that 85% of migration is intra-regional in West Africa, the committee called for concerted efforts to harness the potential benefits of safe human mobility.

The meeting called for the adoption and implementation of immediate measures to strengthen cooperation between UN Regional Offices, Resident Coordinators/UNCTs and governments to scale up the socialization/ownership of UNISS in the field under the leadership of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel and DCO.

RECOMMENDATIONS

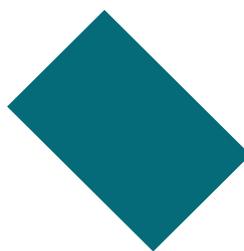
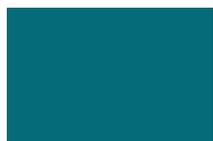
On Water as a Development Accelerator and Key Priority for the Sahel

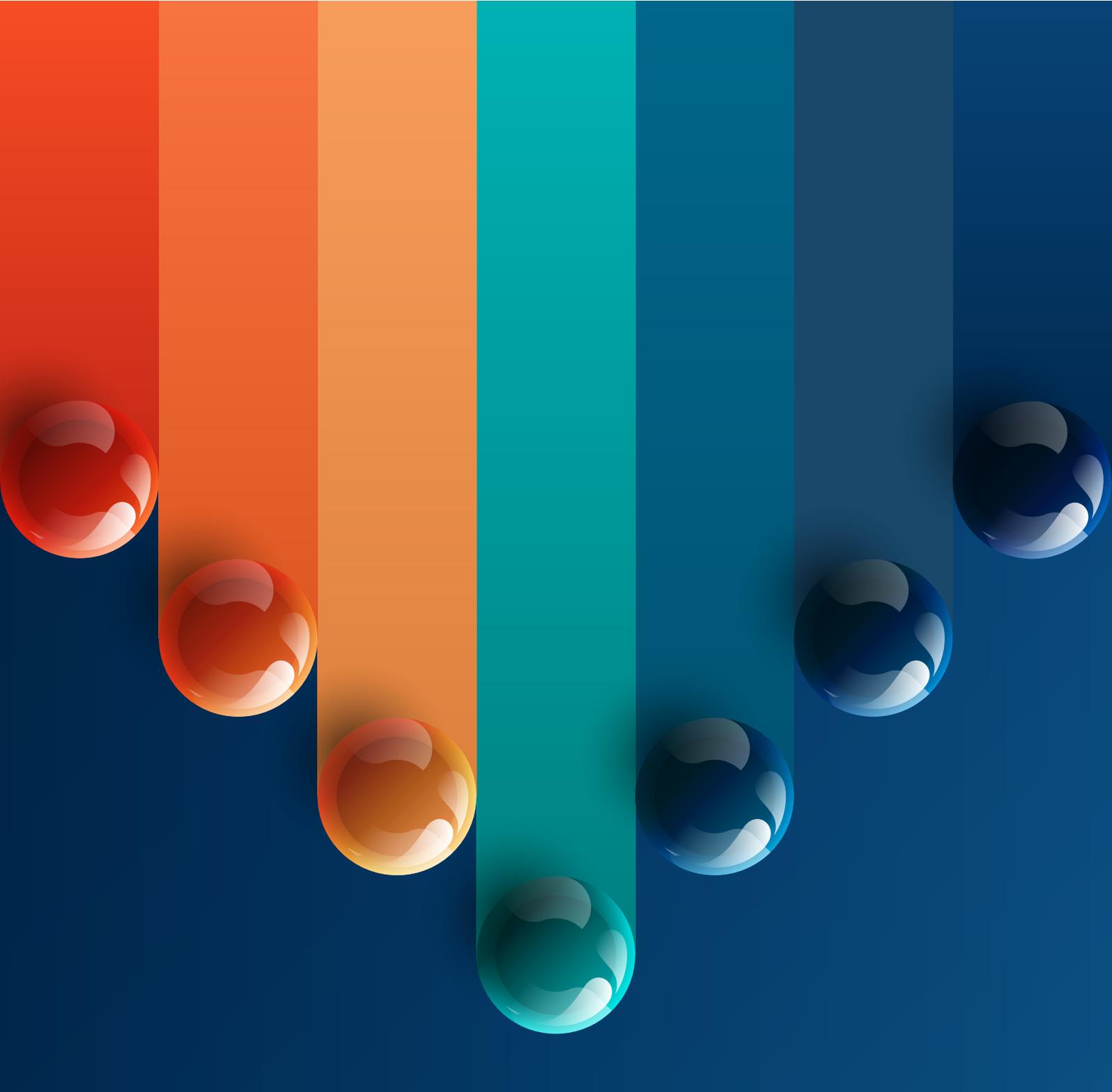
The 14th Steering Committee urged the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel together with the co-chairs of the Steering Committee to lead the process to development and adoption of a Sahel Regional Action Plan on Water to include key areas such as (i) the development and protection of water infrastructure (ii) support for States for enhanced governance of water at all levels with special focus on the protection of the Fouta Djallon mountain massif, considered as the water tower of West Africa, (iii) expand the partnerships to establish a knowledge-based digital platform and (iv) include Water in the next versions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks of Guinea, The Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal, Chad, and Burkina Faso.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Others

Noting that this year 2023 marks the 10th Anniversary of the launch of UNISS, the meeting thanked all stakeholders for their active engagement and agreed to hold the 15th Steering Committee meeting in Nouakchott, Mauritania.





SAHEL

Working Together for a Prosperous and Peaceful Sahel

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