



*Brussels 6 February 2013* - A Senior UN official warns that stabilization in Mali will be a long and difficult endeavour. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs told a high-level meeting on Mali at EU Headquarters in Brussels that the political and security environment on the ground had significantly changed and was bound to have an impact on "our efforts towards the implementation of Security Council resolution 2085." Feltman represented the UN, as the co-Chair of the Meeting of the Support and Follow-up Group on Mali, hosted by the EU in Brussels.

The Meeting, attended by the African Union, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States and many national delegations, was meant to review the recent developments on the ground due to the ongoing military operations. It examined the humanitarian situation; assessed the political process, with particular focus on transition roadmap, elections and national dialogue, and, finally, expanded on the overall situation in the Sahel.

Stressing that it was important that the pledges made at the recent Donors' Conference would swiftly materialize to enable AFISMA (the African-led International Support Mission to Mali) become fully operational, USG Feltman drew the international community's attention to the need to speed up preparations for the post conflict phase of the operation, against a political and security backdrop that has drastically changed since the adoption of the Resolution 2085, only adopted last December. In particular, about the possibility of a UN peacekeeping operation, USG Feltman emphasized the collective dimension of any possible international response, which should be "suited to deal with the situation and the requirements on the ground". He pointed out that the United Nations should stand ready to continue to support the Malian authorities, setting up favorable conditions for governance: in this regard, he highlighted the role the recently established United Nations presence in Bamako is to play, in its close interaction with the national actors.

Expressing in an exclusive interview with the French daily Le Monde the international community's gratitude to France, the USG recalled that the situation in the Northern part of the country had been dreadful for a long time and that "we would be in for a worse situation had Paris not intervened". We have to look at the fragility of the region as a whole, he recalled, listing precarious economy, cross-border crime, ethnic tensions and food insecurity as the main threats for the Sahel. A region, he added, on which the EU has had a comprehensive strategy for some time, while the UN, through the Special Envoy Mr. Romano Prodi, has only recently started developing its own overall policy.

On allegations of human rights violations in the recovered areas, reportedly perpetrated by the Malian defense and security forces, USG Feltman noted that the UN has now no presence of any human rights monitors, therefore calling on all parties to comply with international human rights and humanitarian norms and do everything possible to ensure that all allegations are investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. "Ultimately, the success of our support to the Malian people will depend on the effective combination of our political and security efforts", he said.

Contribution from UNRIC's Nordic and Italian desk officers