Beat: Miscellaneous

UN Security Council approves peacekeeping mission in Mali

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USPA News - The United Nations (UN) Security Council on Thursday adopted a resolution to create a 12,600-strong peacekeeping operation in Mali, taking over from French and African forces which have battled al-Qaeda-linked fighters in the country`s north. The 15-member Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2100 (2013) to establish the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), allowing it to begin operations on July 1. The initial deployment will be for 12 months, but the council can decide to extend it.

Before MINUSMA`s operations begins, the council will first have to review the overall security situation in Mali. Specifically, the council seeks to ensure that major combat operations by international forces have ceased and that there has been a significant reduction in the capacity of militants to pose a major threat to civilians and international forces. If the council determines that these criteria have not been met before July 1, the deployment will be delayed. As part of Resolution 2100 (2013), the UN Security Council has authorized the blue helmets to "use all necessary means" to carry out security-related stabilization tasks, create the conditions for the provision of humanitarian aid, and to ensure the protection of civilians, UN staff and cultural artifacts. The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, underlined that the council is aware that it is "going to be a fairly volatile environment" in Mali. "This is not an enforcement mission. This is not an anti-terrorist operation," he stressed, as MINUSMA`s core task is to support the political process in Mali, in close coordination with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). "The mission will help the Malian authorities to implement the transitional roadmap towards the full restoration of constitutional order, democratic governance and national unity," said Ladsous. "This includes the holding of elections in July, confidence building and facilitation of reconciliation at the national and local levels." The 12-month mandate will take over from the African-led force (AFISMA), and MINUSMA will assume responsibility for the mandated tasks currently being carried out by the UN Office in Mali (UNOM), which deployed in January and provides good offices aimed at facilitating contacts between the Government and those groups that wish to take part in the search for a political solution to the crisis. "Human rights is one of the core elements of the mandate. We will do some vetting of the personnel and we will increase their training in human rights and international humanitarian law," Ladsous told journalists in New York after Thursday`s vote. "We want our people to be impeccable." French President François Hollande welcomed the adoption of the resolution. "This is an important decision that responds to the requests of the Malian authorities and African organizations to transform the African-led International Support Mission to Mali into MINUSMA, which must support the Malian authorities in their efforts to restore the authority of the State, preparations for the election, and reconciliation among all communities in the country," he said. "I pay tribute to the crucial role of French, Malian, and African forces which foiled the terrorist groups that threatened the very existence of Mali. These forces have shown great courage. The professionalism of the French soldiers is a pride for our country," Hollande added. France`s Ambassador to the UN, Gerard Araud, also said Thursday that the French government expects to keep approximately 1,.000 French troops inside Mali until at least the end of the year. Mark Simmonds, Britain`s Minister for Africa, also welcomed the mission`s creation. "Following French and African military operations in northern Mali, this is the appropriate next phase in returning security and stability to the country," he said. "We are pleased that as well as authorizing deployment of a peacekeeping operation, the Resolution makes clear the importance of reconciliation and dialogue between all parties. Ultimately a negotiated political settlement between north and south is the only way to guarantee long-term stability." Fighting in northern Mali began in January 2012 as insurgent groups have been campaigning for independence and autonomy in the region. President Amadou Toumani Toure was ousted in a coup d`etat in March 2012 for failing to handle the crisis, and by April, much of the region had been completely seized by rebel forces. Responding to requests from the Malian government, the French government decided in January of this year to deploy armed forces in Mali in an effort to prevent rebels from advancing south and reaching the country`s capital. Five French soldiers have since died in the conflict.

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