

## **Executive Summary**

Mali is admired for two recent accomplishments. The first is the country's transition to democracy, which took place in 1991-1992. This effort included the overthrow of Moussa Traoré's 23-year-old military dictatorship on 26 March 1991, a process of military and civilian collaboration which fostered national reconciliation, a referendum for a new constitution, and elections which brought to power Mali's first democratically elected President, Government and Legislature. The second achievement is the peacemaking between the Government of Mali and the rebel movements in the northern part of the country: this process successfully prevented the outbreak of civil war and presents useful lessons for the international community in preventive diplomacy. The peacemaking culminated in a ceremony known as the Flame of Peace, when rebel weapons were incinerated in Timbuktu on 27 March 1996. This study of the events surrounding the uprisings in the North of Mali and the measures which restored peace (and those which will maintain it) is the result of a collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

### **Peacemaking and Democracy**

Peacemaking covers the ways in which the armed factions were brought to peace and disarmament through community-based negotiation. Their re-integration into Malian society began the process of peace-building, which includes all the measures necessary to assure peace and security in the longer term. Peace-keeping (i.e. the intervention of international forces to establish the security necessary for peace talks) was never necessary in Mali.

The story of the peacemaking can only be understood in the wider context of the environmental and political events which have preceded it. Thus, this study touches on the drought and history of neglect in the North as well as the transformation from dictatorship to democracy in the capital. General Amadou Toumani Touré (Mali's head of state during the 1991-1992 transition) observed at a recent conference on conflict prevention that Mali has just lived through its third Touareg rebellion. The 1990-1995 "Touareg problem" was not an isolated incident. It had its root causes in history and in general economic and political neglect, compounded by drought and a too-heavy military hand on Mali's northern regions. When he ousted Moussa Traoré in 1991 at the head of a

popular revolution, Touré was faced with negotiating a peace accord with the rebel movements in the North before handing power to his elected successor. He was successful in that a National Pact was signed on 11 April 1992 before Dr. Alpha Oumar Konaré became President of the Republic on 8 June 1992; however, outbreaks of violence continued in the North, and it was left to the democratic Government to restore peace.

Certain aspects of the democratic State were very important to the process of peacemaking. The first was genuine participatory democracy (not only in the form of the ballot box, but also of the “palaver tree”, i.e. local community debates, and local language radio). Furthermore, the Government encouraged collaboration between the military and the Malian population (an essential element of national reconciliation) as well as the relaunch and liberalization of Mali’s economy (involving a revival of the private sector, better management of public finances, and reduced corruption).

Once democracy had been established, the agreement with the armed movements had to be translated into the disarmament, demobilization and re-integration of the rebels. Drawing on the cultural reserves of Mali’s social capital, the Government reduced its military and administrative presence in the North in 1994 in order to make space for civil society (community and religious leaders and grassroots associations) to create the local conditions for peace and the return of displaced populations.

This peace process was also remarkable for the way in which the United Nations agencies were able to help, discreetly dropping oil into the machinery of peacemaking. For a cost of less than \$1 million, the United Nations helped the Malians to avoid a war, and lit the Flame of Peace. With less than \$10 million, the United Nations became the leading partner of Mali’s government and civil society, in peace-building, disarming the ex-combatants and integrating 11,000 into public service and into the socio-economy of the North through a UN Trust Fund. The experience shows that not only is peacemaking better than peace-keeping, but that it is much cheaper.

## **Peace-building under the Palaver Tree**

Mali's peacemaking phase has been successful in the short term. What remains is the building of lasting peace, which can be achieved only through the economic and social development of the North: this includes tackling difficult issues such as land tenure and decentralization, rethinking education and communications, strengthening democratic governance and civil society to enforce the rule of law. The United Nations is taking the lead in supporting Mali's peace-building, encouraging donors to invest in peace. Peace-building has injected a more unified United Nations presence in the field under the UN Resident Coordinator, at the very moment when the Secretary-General is seeking greater operational efficiency. In this regard, the Malian experience is exemplary, as the UN Political Secretariat and UNIDIR have collaborated with the UN Development Programme in New York and in Bamako, promoting security in the North of Mali so that development programmes can get back to work.

Mali shows that peacemaking and peace-building are integral parts of the development process. Although the Malian authorities have constantly been short of funds for things which appear essential to the peace-building process, such as training ex-combatants, tracking car thieves, or re-training and re-equipping the police force, the success of the democratic experiment is making Mali into a favoured partner for commercial banks and for development agencies (many of which have cut their funding in neighbouring countries). Democratic governance is profitable in many ways.

### **Five Years on: The Lessons Learned**

What are the risks that the peace in Mali might fail? The two greatest areas of risk are clearly rainfall and civil unrest. A good rainfall brings huge political (as well as economic) benefits, but there is not a lot that Mali's democratic leadership can do about it. Better management of existing water and infrastructure on the Niger River would help. Mali could have a regular annual cereal surplus if every farmer along the river had access to family-scale water management through small dykes and portable pumps. It is also important to remember the significance of herding in Mali. Coherent land management and better yields are vital both for crops and for livestock. Increased cultivation of pasture areas along the river is a recipe for declining livestock and export revenues, and for unrest. Post-colonial legislation has consistently favoured

sedentary cropping, neglecting the needs of herders, and a new legal conciliation process is proposed to solve conflicts and avoid violence.

While decentralization should lead to a better mobilization of human, financial and natural resources, there is a risk that it may fail: either through administrative paralysis, or because the State and Mali's development partners fail to achieve the cultural, economic and environmental integration of "rich" and "poor" regions. If this happens, it could undermine existing commitments to national unity and undo the National Pact.

West African States have realized that national unity and security cannot be treated as purely internal matters, as long as there is an uncontrolled flow of small arms across the sub-region. To address this problem, the United Nations has partnered Mali in promoting a sub-regional approach to disarmament. United Nations advisory missions have facilitated multi-national contacts, while UNIDIR has been associated with the UNDP and the Political Secretariat in supporting discussions on improving relations between the military and civilians and furthering cross-border collaboration. A key to reducing the availability of illegal firearms is a proposed moratorium on the trade and manufacture of light weapons.

## Principle Findings

### *Important events and characteristics of Malian peacemaking:*

- the State created space for communal healing under the leadership of modern and traditional civil society
- civil society organizations (including women's associations) proved crucial to Mali's peacemaking
- the ex-rebels passed through a process of cantonment, disarmament, and re-training
- the criteria for training and selection of candidates to be integrated into public service were defined by military and civilian authorities in conjunction with rebel leaders
- there was strong symbolic value in the burning of rebel weapons in the Flame of Peace
- security forces were demilitarized and placed under the Ministry of Territorial Administration, separate from the army

*Priority needs for peace-building in Mali:*

- Northern Mali needs urgent assistance to re-establish administrative and social services, particularly health and education
- Mali needs programme development: it does not need flamboyant mega-projects, nor will it benefit from donors scattering micro-projects like salt-and-pepper
- the people of Mali need to be able to rely on the rule of law: civil society has a crucial role in ensuring that the law is applied fairly and in curbing administrative abuse; and the right of association needs strengthening
- while the ex-combatants are men, many returning refugees are women and their re-integration has been less spectacular: development priority needs to be given to women and women's associations
- civil-military relationships need to be transformed through the adoption of a new code of conduct

*Recommendations for ensuring continued peace and development:*

- the strengthening of civil society and the social economy is critical for successful decentralization (this appears particularly urgent in the North of Mali, where a UN-assisted Government programme has helped 9,000 ex-combatants to start a new economic life, but the individual projects will thrive only if the economy is growing)
- the United Nations must provide leadership to NGOs and civil society, working to strengthen and democratize Africa's civil society and social economy
- Mali's partners must adopt new development strategies and decentralize decision-making

- financial resources must be available to support human and technical resources: alternative financing mechanisms could include credit, bank guarantees, community capital funds, and foundations
- most agro-pastoralists in Mali seek collective use of resources at the appropriate season, not “ownership” of geometric space in the European sense: rules and legislation must take account of the pastoralists’ use of space
- new local Conciliation Councils proposed for the decentralized communes could strengthen the judicial process in solving land and water disputes
- security forces need better training and equipment rather than more guns (in reaction to heavily armed security forces, bandits invest in heavier firearms and security is ultimately decreased)
- security forces must be trained to know and respect civil rights, and women must participate in their training
- sub-regional initiatives are required to transform frontiers from barriers into “a shared development space”
- to avoid the export of civil unrest across borders and to suppress the circulation of illegal small arms, the proposal for a West African moratorium on trade in light weapons is a valuable initiative

### **Conclusion**

A renewed breakdown of peace in northern Mali would threaten the stability of the whole region, from Senegal to Chad. Only the relaunch of socio-economic development will convince ex-combatants and returning refugees that they have a future in northern Mali, and that they should believe in the Malian State. Local political disputes in Bamako and the mismanagement of the 1997 elections show how difficult it is to replace African traditions of consensus

politics with imported models which award a “victory”, just as it is difficult to keep separate the political and administrative parts of government. A look into the abyss of failed States in the region is likely to bring Mali’s political actors back to solutions of national consensus under the “palaver tree”.

There emerges from the Malian experience the doctrine of “security for development” or “security first”: an understanding that without a minimum of security, development work cannot take place. As national security is dependent upon regional stability and cross-border cooperation (involving both communities and officials), the regional initiatives that the West African States are currently considering are of great importance.

Ensuring continued peace and development depends on justice and democratic governance, but also on access to resources (credit, banking, technical knowledge, health and veterinary services, appropriate education) and imaginative infrastructure investment not just in roads, but in telecommunications, rural radio, river transport, community-based solar energy and irrigation pumps which reduce the competition for natural space. Such investment is critical for lasting peace in the Sahel. Mali’s donor friends share responsibility for ending the economic marginalization of the North: for without peace in the North, there can be no economic development in the whole of Mali, nor in the West African sub-region.