West Africa and the Sahel

There is growing insecurity, terrorism, and maritime piracy in West Africa, the Sahel, and the Gulf of Guinea. The African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are working to solve these security challenges. However, the current issues have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. The responsibility of restoring stability and protecting civilians’ rests with Governments in the region, but they cannot do it alone. Therefore, the support of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), regional organizations, and the international community are imperative so that the people of these nations do not suffer. In addition, there is a need to address underlying environments that encourage the spread of terrorism, emphasize women’s participation in creating peace and stability, and enable UNOWAS to integrate information on the impact of climate change in its activities.

As of January 10th, 2022, Piracy and armed robbery at sea were costing the Gulf of Guinea States over $1.5 billion annually, along with an additional $1.4 billion being lost in port fees and import tariffs (Juul, Mona). Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Ghada Fathi Waly, stated, “These billions represent lost potential, and funds that could otherwise be invested in licit economies and in developing coastal communities
— funds that are needed now more than ever in the continuing COVID-19 crisis.” Overall, organized crime increases instability, violence, and poverty across the region. A lack of opportunities creates frustration and drives more young people to crime, making them more receptive to radicalization narratives. These conditions lead to individuals being vulnerable to human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Women and girls are at greater risk of exploitation, and sexual violence, 59 percent of detected trafficking victims in West and Central Africa are children, and 27 percent are women (Waly, Ghada Fathi).

There is a need for international support to strengthen comprehensive and cooperative crime responses with the continuing situations. Humanitarian conditions are being exacerbated by the pandemic, creating forced displacement, social inequalities, violence, and food insecurity. The United Nations is essential for assisting The Group of Five for the Sahel joint force in creating plans to tackle these growing problems. Enhanced cooperation and security support to Sahel countries from United Nations will aid in setting clear objectives.
Works Cited:

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