

**Security Council Open Debate on Peace and security in Africa: The impact of transnational organized crime on peace, security and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region**  
**21<sup>st</sup> of February 2012, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Wittig from the permanent delegation of Germany to the United Nations*

Mr. President, we thank you for convening this important debate and for your personal presence today. Germany attaches great importance to the fight against organized crime. We highly appreciate the efforts of the delegation of Togo in this regard. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and Mr. Fedotov for his briefing at the outset. We all have been observing with growing concern the impact of transnational organized crime on peace and security in West Africa and the Sahel region. The spread of transnational organized crime — including illicit trafficking of drugs, arms and human beings, as well as the more recent phenomenon of acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea — and insecurity go hand in hand. They are facilitated by weak governance, insufficient implementation of the rule of law and corruption. Countries in conflict and post-conflict situations are especially vulnerable to organized criminal activities, which in turn further undermine the already weak institutions of these States. In recent years, links between organized crime and terrorist groups, made in a mere partnership of convenience, have become a particular concern. Most of the States in West Africa and the Sahel lack the capacity and equipment to address criminal and terrorist activities effectively. At the same time, transnational organized crime is a security threat that, by definition, cannot be tackled by any one country alone. A comprehensive, integrated approach is required to address transnational organized crime. Cooperation and coordination between the affected countries, as well as with and between the regional organizations must be strengthened. Information sharing in particular needs to be improved. To this end, several instruments and initiatives have been developed, yet their effective implementation requires enhanced national and regional capacities, strong political will and sufficient financial support. Let me highlight the following example. At the global level, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the so-called Palermo Convention, including its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, is of particular importance. We welcome the recently developed United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime framework for action providing guidance on how to implement the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants, and we encourage all States parties to make use of this helpful instrument. The Palermo Convention, like other United Nations conventions focusing on organized crime and illegal drugs, provides important legal tools to counter these scourges of humanity. At the regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Regional Action Plan 2008-2011 represents a promising framework for combating illegal drug trafficking and organized crime in West Africa. It should be extended to 2012 and beyond, and its implementation should be accelerated. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office in West Africa and INTERPOL have played a crucial role in assisting the ECOWAS Plan through the West Africa Coast Initiative. Its focal points for cooperation — the so-called transnational crime units — could serve as an example for other regions. The Judicial Regional Platform of Sahel countries, established in 2010, is aimed at institutionalizing judicial cooperation in preventing S/PV.6717 16 12-23593 and combating organized crime, corruption, drug trafficking and terrorism. We encourage other States in the region to join that Platform. Effective regional and international cooperation in the fight against transnational organized crime relies heavily on the stability and capacities of the individual partners involved. National capacities therefore need to be strengthened, and root causes need to be addressed in countries susceptible to organized crime. That includes the promotion of the rule of law and of good governance in fostering socio-economic development. Germany has been working together with countries in West Africa and the Sahel region, as well as with regional organizations and the United Nations agencies concerned, in fighting transnational organized crime, including through addressing its root causes. In that regard, I should like to mention our support for the Global Container Control Programme, which is aimed at ensuring the effective control of container cargo in several West African countries, in order to suppress and prevent drug trafficking from Latin America via West Africa to Europe. Furthermore, we support capacity-building projects aimed at enhancing the rule of law and the justice systems in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, the Niger and Sierra Leone. We also support the activities conducted by ECOWAS in States of the region to enhance police capacities in post-conflict situations. Germany also cooperates with Côte d'Ivoire in the control of small arms and light weapons by supporting the relevant authorities, by training and capacity-building, and by developing arms-collection mechanisms at the community level. We contribute to the European Union's Sahel strategy, which addresses both development and security issues and is aimed at strengthening regional cooperation. With a view to dealing with the long-term socio-economic root causes of transnational crime, we would recall that just a week ago agreements establishing the West African Science

Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use were signed in Lomé. That forward-looking initiative is designed to respond to climate change and to preserve sustainable livelihoods in the region. Climate change certainly constitutes one of the root causes of the current food crisis in the Sahel. Germany recently allocated €12 million in additional funds for food aid in the region, and the European Union is increasing its food aid from €95 million to €124 million. We hope that concerted efforts will help to overcome this humanitarian crisis. Let me conclude by pointing out that my delegation associates and aligns itself with the European Union statement to be delivered later.