



15 July 2013 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon, meeting with officials in France on the occasion of Bastille Day, paid tribute to the country's contributions to ending the turmoil in Mali, after stressing the importance of credible elections in the West African country in talks with its interim president.

“I highly appreciate the very important contribution and sacrifice of France toward bringing about peace, security and development for the Malian people,” Mr. Ban told the press after meeting with French President Francois Hollande at the Elysee Palace in Paris.

In early 2013, a rebellion of ethnic Tuareg groups followed by an insurgency of Islamist extremists displaced hundreds of thousands in Mali and prompted the Government to request assistance from France to halt the southward march of the extremists, as an African-led force, known as AFISMA, gradually built strength.

Earlier this month, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ( [MINUSMA](#) ), took over from the African-led force, with a Security Council mandate “to use all necessary means” to carry out security-related stabilization tasks, protect civilians, UN staff and cultural sites and create the conditions for provision of humanitarian aid.

In today's meeting with Mr. Hollande, the Secretary-General said he told the French President that he counted on his continued leadership and support in Mali. “As you know well,” he told correspondents, “the mandate of MINUSMA requires many capabilities such as armed military helicopters.”



“I asked the President to consider providing such capabilities,” he added.

Yesterday, he said, as he watched the parades celebrating Bastille Day, “I was very moved to see the Blue Helmets at the side of Malian forces as well as French Forces – in particular those of Operation Serval.” The Operation is the French security mission in Mali.

Also in Paris yesterday, the Secretary-General met with the interim President of Mali, Diacounda Traoré, who he said welcomed the transfer of authority from AFISMA to the new UN peacekeeping mission.

According to information released by Mr. Ban's spokesperson, the two also discussed the human rights situation in Mali and the Secretary-General noted the importance of the upcoming presidential elections, stressing that they needed to be credible and peaceful, with an outcome

accepted by all Malians.

The spokesperson reported that Mr. Ban also discussed the situation in Mali yesterday with French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, including the mandate of MINUSMA, support of French troops for the Mission and the effect of the crisis on countries in the region.

They also exchanged views on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Lebanon and in Syria, according to the spokesperson's information.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in joint press conference with French President François Hollande at the Elysee Palace in Paris. UN

Photo/Rick Bajorna < ["I asked the President to consider providing such capabilities," he added.](#)

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