

Message from the Presidency

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mali, H.E. Mr. Lassana Traore

The current international context is characterized by a deteriorating level of human security in everyday life, influenced by many factors, the most recent being the Iraq crisis.

The region of Africa, which Mali has the honour and privilege of representing within the Human Security Network, is home to numerous internal conflicts and situations that are jeopardizing human security and presenting enormous and complex challenges for the future.

Developing an international policy strategy based on human security has proven necessary in this day and age, so some countries, including Mali, have been committed to working together since 1999 as part of the Human Security Network, to ensure that all stakeholders in the international community—including governments, international and regional institutions and civil society—share this concern.

The Human Security Network is made up of twelve (12) member countries (Austria, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Jordan, **Mali**, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand) and one (1) observer (South Africa).

As you can see, Mali is the only full-member African country in the Network, so our Chairmanship is arousing great hope for the promotion of the concept of human security in Africa.

Aware of the challenges awaiting it as Chair of the Human Security Network, the Government of Mali organized a National Human Security Workshop in Bamako on April 14 and 15, 2003. I would like to reiterate my thanks to Canada for its support in this endeavour.

This Workshop brought together representatives of the Government and civil society and was aimed at encouraging national stakeholders to adopt the concept of human security and determining the priorities of the Malian Chair.

On the recommendation of the Workshop, the Government has selected the following topics to be the priorities of the Malian Chair:

- **Human rights education:** This is one of the Network's priority issues on its 2003-2005 workplan. Action by the Malian Chair will consist in continuing the work of Austria, which undertook key initiatives in this area during its mandate. Therefore, the "Understanding Human Rights" Manual, one of the contributions of the Austrian Chair, is set to be officially released during a major event in Bamako in November 2003. Extensive promotion of the experience of the human rights *Cités Consensuelles* is also expected during the Malian Chairmanship.
- **Children in armed conflicts:** A priority issue on the Network's agenda, this is of great interest to Mali because problems experienced by children before, during and after conflicts are at the core of human security.
- **Small arms and light weapons:** This is one of the priorities on the Human Security Network's 2003-2005 workplan. The Workshop identified two major activities in particular: a study on conflicts and non-government armed groups in the ECOWAS region; and the contribution of Mali (and the Network) to the development of an International Convention on Small Arms. These activities would be in addition to those already being carried out within the Network, including the organization of a Workshop on the "humanitarian aspects" of small arms on the margins of the International Conference of the Red Cross in Geneva in December 2003.
- **Gender in peacekeeping operations:** A major issue focussing on protecting civilians by building the capacities of armed forces and security forces responsible for peacekeeping operations. Integrating "gender" into peacekeeping operations comes within the scope of implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted during the session of October 31, 2000, the Beijing Declaration (Platform for Action+5) and the Windhoek Declaration.

In addition to these priority issues, the Malian Chair will work to promote the concept of Human Security in Africa, especially in West Africa, as part of the regional approach of the Network's activities.

These remarks were delivered by H.E. Mr. Lassana Traore at the close of the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Human Security Network, 10 May 2003.