

Minutes of the Maliwatch (MW) Annual Meeting. This is a summary rather than minutes.

Date: Sunday, May 24, 2026

Location: Embassy of Mali, Washington, D.C., and via Zoom

List of Participants: See attached list.

1. Opening of the Meeting

The 2026 Maliwatch (MW) Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, May 24, 2026, at the Embassy of Mali in Washington, D.C., with additional participation via Zoom.

At 9:15 a.m., President **Harouna Abdoulaye Maiga**, participating by videoconference, called the meeting to order. He welcomed all participants and expressed his appreciation for their attendance. He explained that he was unable to be physically present in Washington, D.C., due to health concerns.

President Maiga indicated that **Professor Diola Bagayoko** would moderate the discussions among participants attending the meeting at the Embassy, while he would moderate the discussions for participants joining via Zoom. Professor Bagayoko noted that, since **Mr. Bakary Sylla**, the first President of Maliwatch, was present at the Embassy, he proposed that Mr. Sylla moderate the in-person session. The proposal was approved.

The following distinguished guests also offered greetings to the participants:

- **Mr. Mahamadou Nassirou Ba**, President of the Club des Doyens de Washington;
- **Mrs. Sow Aminata Traoré**, Vice-President of the *Haut Conseil des Maliens d'Amérique*.

On behalf of **H.E. Ambassador Sekou Berthe** and the entire Embassy staff, **H.E. Minister-Counselor Noel Diarra** warmly welcomed the participants and conveyed greetings from the Embassy. He highlighted the strong collaboration between Maliwatch and the Embassy since the establishment of Maliwatch in 1997. He noted that the 2025 annual meeting had been a success and expressed confidence that the 2026 meeting would be equally successful.

Following a short coffee break, the educational presentations began.

2. Educational Presentations

2.1. Training of Malian Talents in Artificial Intelligence – Maliwatch Youth Group

An educational PowerPoint presentation on artificial intelligence was delivered by **Amadou Kane** and **Mamadou Konate**, representing the Maliwatch Youth Group. The presenters explained the Youth Group's plans to collaborate with the “**Centre d’Intelligence Artificielle et Robotique” du Mali (CIAR Mali)** to develop training opportunities for Malian youth in artificial intelligence. They indicated that the Youth Group intends to develop a final project for consideration and approval by Maliwatch.

2.2. MaliHealth – Presentation by Tara Hopkins

Tara Hopkins presented the activities and mission of **MaliHealth**, a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of women and children in Bamako, with a particular focus on maternal and child health, maternal and infant mortality, nutrition, and overall well-being.

MaliHealth was established in 2006 by a group of Malian and American women concerned about the extremely high number of maternal and infant deaths in Sikoro, a peri-urban community of Bamako. The organization's mission is to help women and communities develop local solutions that ensure every mother and child has access to quality primary health care.

Ms. Hopkins explained that MaliHealth works directly with women's associations in Bamako to provide education and information on women's health, pregnancy, vaccinations, health care, and nutrition. She emphasized that children under five remain particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and infectious diseases, including malaria, diarrhea, and respiratory infections.

She expressed MaliHealth's interest in collaborating with Maliwatch to advocate for women's health and provide financial assistance to women's associations in Bamako.

Ms. Hopkins identified several priority areas for collaboration with Maliwatch. She noted that the Maliwatch community is uniquely positioned to support the development of community-led solutions aimed at ending preventable mortality. The proposed areas of collaboration include:

1. **Collaborating on the implementation of projects of mutual interest**, similar to the previous collaboration addressing the Ebola outbreak in Guinea and its potential spread across the border into Mali.
2. **Recruiting members for the MaliHealth Board of Directors.**
3. **Recruiting volunteers.** MaliHealth welcomes volunteers of all ages, particularly students and young people who have time to contribute to its activities.
4. **Developing fundraising resources and strategies that are consistent with the organization's values of community engagement and collective solidarity.**

These may include:

- o Donations and *tontines*;
- o Peer-to-peer and community-level fundraising;
- o Income-generating activities aligned with the principles of a regenerative and solidarity-based economy.

President Harouna Abdoulaye Maiga indicated that Maliwatch would follow up with Ms. Hopkins to further explore potential areas of collaboration.

2.3. Pollution of the Niger River in Mali: Diagnosis, Impacts, and Perspectives

Dr. Sidy Ba, Ing., Ph.D., Specialist in Environmental Engineering, presented an important and comprehensive analysis entitled ***“Pollution of the Niger River in Mali: Diagnosis, Impacts and Perspectives.”***

Dr. Ba highlighted the seriousness of pollution affecting the Niger River, Mali's vital waterway, and presented the issue as follows:

1. **Increasing and multifaceted pollution:** The pollution of the Niger River has reached critical levels and is tending to worsen along its course. The river is experiencing increasing and multifactorial pressures, including the discharge of untreated wastewater, accumulation of solid waste, industrial effluents, agricultural runoff containing fertilizers and pesticides, and, increasingly, effluents from artisanal dyeing facilities discharged directly onto riverbanks and into drainage systems that flow into the river.
2. **Mining and dredging impacts:** In addition, uncontrolled mining and intensive gold dredging represent major and often underestimated threats. These activities resuspend sediments contaminated with mercury and other heavy metals, profoundly affecting the ecology of the river and altering the morphology of the watercourse.
3. **Environmental, health, and economic consequences:** The degradation of the Niger River has multiple and severe consequences, including a drastic deterioration in water quality, loss of aquatic biodiversity, increased health risks for local populations, including mercury exposure and waterborne diseases and declining productivity of economic activities that depend on the river, such as fishing, irrigated agriculture, and small-scale navigation.
4. **Need for urgent action:** Dr. Ba emphasized the need for an urgent and uncompromising response. This should include strengthening policies for integrated water-resource management, modernizing liquid and solid waste treatment systems, strictly enforcing laws governing mining and artisanal activities, and promoting environmentally responsible industrial and agricultural practices.
5. **Importance of protecting the Niger River:** Preserving the quality of the Niger River is an imperative for public health, food security, environmental sustainability, and the overall sustainable development of Mali.

3. Discussion and Participants' Contributions

All three presentations were considered highly interesting, informative, and relevant. Participants actively engaged in the discussions and shared their views on how Maliwatch could contribute to addressing the issues presented.

Regarding the pollution of the Niger River, participants suggested that **Dr. Ba prepare and submit an urgent “SOS” letter to the Government of Mali** to raise awareness about the severity of the river's pollution and to call for immediate measures to address the problem.

The three presentations were made available on the Maliwatch website at **Maliwatch.com**.

4. Update on Maliwatch Activities and Budget

A presentation on Maliwatch's activities and budget was scheduled to be delivered by **Professor Harouna A. Maiga and Dr. Talatou Maiga**.

Unfortunately, the presentation could not be delivered because of a power outage at the Embassy. The outage resulted in the loss of internet connectivity, inadequate lighting, and increasingly uncomfortable room temperatures. Under these circumstances, participants requested that the meeting be brought to an end.

5. Closing Remarks

Closing remarks were delivered by **H.E. Minister-Counselor Noel Diarra, Harouna Abdoulaye Maiga, Mahamadou Nassirou Ba, and Diola Bagayoko**.

All speakers agreed that the meeting had been productive, informative, and successful. They expressed their sincere appreciation to **H.E. Ambassador Sekou Berthe** and the Embassy staff for hosting the meeting and providing their support.

They also extended their deepest appreciation to **Mrs. Adam Ouologuem** for preparing and providing the delicious food served during the meeting. Appreciation was likewise expressed to all participants for their active participation, valuable contributions, and constructive engagement in the discussions.

The speakers concluded by wishing all participants a safe journey home.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at **4:30 p.m. Eastern Time (20:30 GMT)** following the power outage at the Embassy.

Respectfully submitted, Harouna Abdoulaye Maiga