Members of the PREGEC reviewed the progress of the current agro-pastoral season, and the agricultural and food prospects by videoconference on 24 September 2020:

1. The 2020-21 agro-pastoral season is taking place in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, affecting all countries. Since March 2020, governments and partners have been carrying out interventions for food insecure populations affected by the security (internally displaced persons) and health crises. These interventions mainly involve social transfers, food distributions or food price subsidies. Support for agro-pastoral activities includes the provision of inputs (seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, vaccines, etc.), agricultural mechanisation services and other agricultural equipment.

2. The rainfall pattern observed since the beginning of the season has been favourable overall to the development of crops and natural vegetation. However, heavy rainfall has resulted in flooding causing extensive damage to property and assets (fields and livestock) as well as loss of lives in Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

3. In terms of hydrological conditions, river flows in the major basins have been much higher than normal (1981-2010) due to heavy rainfall. For example, on the Niger River, the Niamey station reached water levels never observed since its creation. The resulting river overflows have caused thousands of displaced people, especially in Senegal, Niger and Benin.

4. In terms of agriculture, crop development is satisfactory overall due to good agro-meteorological conditions since the beginning of the season. The expected yields of rain-fed crops may therefore be somewhat higher than the median values over the last five years. The first harvests of maize, groundnut, voandzou and fresh yam from Sudanian zones are being put on the market in addition to those from the coastal areas of the Gulf of Guinea countries, where they experienced a heavy wet season.

5. The phytosanitary situation is relatively stable and under control for all pests. However, the risk of attacks by grain-eating birds is of concern for cereal harvests, particularly in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. While the fall armyworm continues to establish itself in the region, damage remains relatively low in most countries. As for the desert locust, the risk of swarms from East Africa has decreased due to preventive actions implemented by States and partners within the framework of the Commission for controlling desert locust in the western region. However, vigilance and continuation of ongoing interventions are required. Ecological conditions may be favourable to the development of the desert locust in breeding areas across Chad, Mali and Mauritania.