The UNSGSA explored ways to strengthen the soundness of the growing microfinance sector in Senegal, Mali and the West African Economic and Monetary Union through robust consumer protection, among other measures. She also discussed ways to increase access to a diverse range of financial services for individuals and enterprises, especially but not only in rural areas. Introduction of mobile phone banking and regionalization creates potential for economies of scale, larger markets and transfer of best practices among the countries.

The UNSGSA met with the President of Senegal, the President of Mali, and ministers overseeing finance, agriculture, enterprise growth, industry, trade and investments, and microfinance. She also met with the Special Advisor to the Acting Governor of the Central Bank of Western African States (BCEAO) and Senegal and Mali’s National BCEAO Directors to identify further opportunities to strengthen inclusive finance through regulations. She held multi-stakeholder consultations on progress and opportunities with the West African Economic and Monetary Union, BCEAO, UN, donors, private banks, MFIs and networks, and mobile phone companies. The UNSGSA also met with donors and the UN country teams. During a field visit to Koulikoro, Mali, she met with a small women’s cooperative and a large chicken farm to better understand their financial lives, and what micro and enterprise finance services are available locally and how they use them.