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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Sahel/Mali
- Council conclusions (25 June 2018)

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the Sahel/Mali as adopted at the 3628th meeting of the Council on 25 June 2018.

Council Conclusions on the Sahel / Mali

1. The High-Level International Conference on the Sahel in Brussels on 23 February 2018 marked an unprecedented level of support from the international community to the Sahel. The EU urges all stakeholders who pledged contributions at the Conference to clarify them and swiftly deliver on their commitments. The recent EU-G5 Ministerial Meeting in Brussels, convened by the High Representative, highlighted the EU's broad and result-oriented engagement with the G5 Sahel. In this context, the EU reiterates its strategic and comprehensive engagement towards the Sahel region, based on the EU Sahel Strategy and its Regional Action Plan.

2. The EU will continue to support the stabilisation efforts of the G5 Sahel countries as a basis for the development of the Sahel. This will require a coherent stabilisation approach across international and national instruments, with a focus on local ownership and delivery of a politically led integrated approach, with equal coverage of security, governance and development. It must address the root causes of the multiple challenges in the region and promote its sustainable and inclusive development, as well as an inclusive and efficient governance that meets the needs and aspirations of the people throughout the territory. The EU will continue to work jointly with the G5 Sahel countries and calls for enhanced coordination with all international actors working in the region to tackle these challenges. EU projects like GAR-SI Sahel can additionally make a significant contribution to this end. Also, the work of initiatives such as the Sahel Alliance, to improve delivery of development programmes, especially in the most vulnerable areas, is an important contribution to these efforts.

3. Within the framework of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2391, the EU confirms its commitment to engage with and support the G5 Sahel countries on the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, including through the African Peace Facility and the Coordination Hub, which deals with both military and non-military contributions to, inter alia, human rights and local trust-building, and in close cooperation with the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and relevant regional and sub-regional organisations, notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The EU calls on the G5 Sahel countries to fully deploy remaining troop and police contributions in order to attain full operational capability of the Joint Force and conduct anti-terrorist operations. It is important to move forward with the establishment of appropriate structures to embed the G5 Sahel Joint Force in a broader political and institutional framework. In this context, the EU expects and strongly supports the swift operationalisation of a robust compliance framework to prevent, investigate, address and publicly report violations and abuses of human rights as well as violations of International Humanitarian Law related to the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

4. It is also critical to ensure accountability and the appropriate transfer to criminal justice of those apprehended during operations and suspected of terrorism and other crimes. The EU underlines the need to support the national judiciary as well as regional judicial cooperation in order to enable the legal transfer of suspects and evidence between different jurisdictions. The EU furthermore emphasises the importance of establishing collaborative and trustful relations between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and communities living in the areas where operations take place. Support to local civil society organisations and other actors like National Human Rights Commissions in order to build local capacity and trust between security forces and the population is crucial to this end.

The EU encourages the G5 Presidency to follow up on the outcome document of the High-Level Conference on Human Rights and Strengthening the Trust between Security Forces and Local Populations in the Sahel held in Brussels on 22 February, and stands ready to support such a process.

5. The EU recalls the effective contribution of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions in the Sahel (EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger), in line with their respective core mandates in their host countries, including in support of the Joint Force, taking into account its police/gendarmerie component. To this end, the EU will engage with the governments of the G5 Sahel countries to ensure the effective integration of the personnel trained under the CSDP missions into their respective national security forces. In addition to the strengthening of national capabilities by CSDP actions, the EU underlines the importance of the regionalisation of CSDP in the Sahel with the aim of strengthening, as appropriate, the civilian and military support to cross-border cooperation, the regional cooperation structures – in particular those of the G5 Sahel – and the capacity and ownership of the G5 countries to address the security challenges in the region. This regionalisation approach will also take into account the EU efforts, including CSDP, to stabilise Libya.
6. The EU reiterates its support to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which operates in a very complex environment, and urges a further deepening of the collaboration and synergies between the different actors and missions on the ground. The EU commends the efforts of the UN to support the G5 Sahel Joint Force. It welcomes MINUSMA taking a leading role in support of the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. While underlining the primary responsibility for the peace process of the signatory parties and all other relevant Malian actors on the ground, the EU would welcome MINUSMA taking a strengthened and more focused role in this regard.

7. The EU is deeply concerned about the magnitude of the food and nutrition crisis in a context of increasing fragility, drought and high food prices. It calls on the Governments in charge to step up the provision of life-saving assistance and protection, in particular for refugees, internally displaced persons, women, children and persons with disabilities. At the same time, and in complementarity with the Governments' efforts, the EU will continue to provide support to the millions of vulnerable people affected by conflicts, widespread insecurity, recurrent natural disasters and poverty in the region, and to strengthen their resilience. It is essential to mainstream the nexus between climate change and security in policy dialogue, conflict prevention, development and disaster risk strategies, as well as to fully ensure the linkages to humanitarian action in a region significantly affected by climate change.
8. The fight against terrorism, trafficking in drugs, weapons and human beings are common challenges that need to be addressed in compliance with international law. The EU recalls its full solidarity with countries and populations that are regularly targeted by terrorist organisations and strongly condemns the violations and abuses of human rights committed by these groups, in particular against the civilian population.
9. The EU reaffirms the essential role of women and girls in ensuring peace, development and prosperity, and calls on Sahel partners to protect and advance girls' and women's empowerment and enjoyment of human rights. This means ensuring equal education and economic opportunities for women and girls, improving access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, and strengthening their role as political actors, including in crisis response processes.

Investing in youth development, empowerment and employment in the Sahel is critical in order to consolidate progress in terms of development, preventing violent extremism, countering terrorism and radicalisation. These efforts geared towards conflict prevention are a cornerstone of the EU's partnership with the G5 Sahel countries.

Addressing demographic challenges, including population growth in the Sahel will therefore be key to the region achieving a more prosperous and secure future.

10. The EU reconfirms its commitment to strengthen its engagement with the G5 Sahel countries on migration in the region in line with the five pillars of the Valletta Action Plan, the Partnership Framework, the AU-EU Abidjan Declaration and the work of the Tripartite AU-EU-UN Taskforce on the migration situation in Libya. The EU underlines the need for enhanced collective efforts with the G5 Sahel countries to save lives, assist and protect migrants and refugees, fight against smuggling and trafficking in human beings, secure humanitarian access to vulnerable populations in conflict zones, while providing viable alternatives to irregular migration, in particular to communities along the main transit routes. Enhancing cooperation in the area of returns and readmission in accordance with international law and standards is also crucial. The EU reiterates its determination to support broad-based cooperation between countries in the Sahel and Libya in pursuit of these objectives and to tackle related cross-border challenges, including on the southern borders of Libya, while taking into account the security situation in this region.

11. The situation in Mali influences the Sahel region and beyond. Further, consistent progress is needed in the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Mali. The EU calls on the signatory parties of the Algiers agreement and on all stakeholders and representatives of the population in the north of Mali to effectively implement all outstanding provisions of the Agreement without further delay. The meaningful participation of women, youth and civil society in the process must be increased. To this end, the signatory parties must improve communication with the Malian population on the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement and its implementation, as recommended by the Independent Observer to the Agreement in her first report. The EU welcomes the adoption of UNSC resolution 2374(2017) establishing a sanctions regime in Mali and recalls that any party failing to engage constructively in the peace process is to be considered as an obstacle to peace.

12. The forthcoming electoral process in Mali will have long-lasting implications for the stability and development of the country and the wider region. The EU reaffirms its commitment to support Mali in this process and welcomes the High Representative's decision to deploy an Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) for the presidential election in July 2018. Only a credible and transparent electoral process, in respect of fundamental freedoms, will ensure the necessary legitimacy for the elected leadership to tackle Mali's multiple security, human rights, humanitarian, governance and development challenges. All Malian actors, and in particular the relevant government bodies, must do their utmost to ensure that the elections are credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful.

13. The EU reaffirms its commitment and stands ready to continue to accompany Mali in its efforts to improve the security and development of the north and the centre of the country, and to regain control of all its territory. The EU will continue to support, in close coordination between all security and development actors, including MINUSMA, the development in central Mali of local relationships and systems to manage conflict and to safeguard the trust between the civilian population and the state authorities, as well as between communities, in full respect of human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Improving inter-communal relations should be supported by the provision of public services and infrastructure, as foreseen in national plans supported by the EU.