



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 9 April 2019
(OR. en)

8382/19

COPS 117
CIVCOM 43
FIN 284
CFSP/PESC 276
CSDP/PSDC 170
RELEX 366
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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	7279/19 COPS 76 CIVCOM 22 FIN 230 CFSP/PESC 205 CSDP/PSDC 113 RELEX 250 JAI 281 COAFR 47 EUCAP SAHEL 5 EUCAP MALI 10
Subject:	Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 15/2018: "Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress"

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council Conclusions on the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 15/2018: "Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress", as adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 8 April 2019.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON
THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS SPECIAL REPORT NO.15/2018
"STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES
IN NIGER AND MALI: ONLY LIMITED AND SLOW PROGRESS"**

1. The Council welcomes the publication of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) Special Report n°15/2018: "Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress" of 14 June 2018, which covers the period since the launch of EUCAP Sahel Niger in 2012 and EUCAP Sahel Mali in 2014. The Council acknowledges that ECA's findings contribute to improving working methods and processes within Missions.
2. The Council notes that the ECA concluded that, despite the challenging context and operational inefficiencies, the Missions contributed towards strengthening the capacity of the forces responsible for internal security. It commends the hard work performed by both Missions, which over the years succeeded in becoming key partners supporting the Security Sector Reform processes of both countries. The mandate implementation achievements have been welcomed by the Council at the occasion of Strategic Reviews and mandate extensions.
3. The Council underlines the relevance of the five recommendations formulated by the Court of Auditors: to take measures to improve the operational efficiency of the Missions; to improve the occupancy rate of staff posts in the Missions; to set mandates and budgets to match operations and provide for an exit strategy; to increase the focus on sustainability; to improve indicators, monitoring and evaluation.

4. The Council acknowledges that a number of measures are being implemented in response to the ECA Report recommendations, including as part of the follow up to the Civilian CSDP Compact and the commitments therein of Member States, the EEAS and the Commission.
5. First, the Council welcomes the measures taken to improve the operational efficiency of the Missions, implemented by the EEAS and the Commission. These include the operationalisation of the Core Responsiveness Capacity to improve the rapid deployment of qualified experts, the reinforcement of the Mission Support Platform, the establishment of the Strategic Warehouse and the delegation of procurement responsibilities to Heads of Missions. The Council also notes ongoing work by the EEAS aimed at enhancing implementation through the provision of practical guidance and examples of best practices to the Missions. It invites the EEAS and the Commission to take forward these different initiatives, as appropriate.
6. Second, the Council notes that the occupancy rates in both Missions have improved since the publication of the Report. Recalling the commitments from the Civilian CSDP Compact related to the increased number and the priority given to seconded staff, the Council recalls its invitation to the EEAS to review its recruitment policy and procedures for the civilian CSDP missions, in close coordination with Member States. The Council also invites the EEAS to explore solutions to address the staff turnover in missions.
7. Third, the Council recalls its Decisions to establish two-year budgetary periods for both Missions^{1 2}, matching their longer and multi-annual mandates, as well as their objectives and taking into consideration the situation on the ground.

¹ COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2018/1247 of 18 September 2018 amending Decision 2012/392/CFSP on the European Union CSDP mission in Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger) – OJ L 235 of 19.9.2018;

² COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2019/312 of 21 February 2019 amending and extending Decision 2014/219/CFSP on the European Union CSDP Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) – OJ L 51 of 22.2.2019

8. Fourth, the Council takes note of the upgrade of both Missions' advising and training activities that aims to follow counterparts through mentoring, as well as the enhancement of train the trainers approach. The Council invites both Missions to further focus on sustainability, developing transition strategies, and by handing over activities, as appropriate, to encourage autonomy in the Internal Security Forces, and focusing on providing support and back up as well as following up the use made of training and equipment. In this regard, the Council also underlines the importance of further strengthening the local ownership of the authorities in Niger and Mali.
9. Finally, regarding the ECA recommendation to further improve the Missions' indicators, monitoring and evaluation, the Council welcomes the reinforcement of evaluation capacities by the establishment of dedicated cells in both Missions. It encourages the two Missions to continue developing their monitoring and evaluation processes and capabilities. In addition, the Council invites the EEAS to explore, in close cooperation with Member States and the Commission, the possibility to carry out external evaluations of CSDP Missions.
10. The Council welcomes the fruitful interaction of both Missions with the Commission and EU Member States' bilateral initiatives to promote the EU Integrated Approach. The Council also welcomes substantial levels of cooperation between all CSDP Missions in the Sahel, also in the framework of the Regionalisation process, and their engagement with international partners such as MINUSMA, UN agencies and programmes and the G5 Sahel structures. The Council encourages the EEAS and CSDP actors to further strengthen this coordination.
