

EU mobilises the international community for Africa's Sahel region

The International High Level Conference on the Sahel, co-chaired today by the European Union, the United Nations, the African Union and the G5 Sahel group of countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger), has mobilised political support for the Sahel region, **€414 million** to support the Joint security Force of the G5 Sahel whilst reinforcing the coordination of sustainable development efforts in the region.

On the occasion, President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *“Instability has many factors so our response must be linked and ambitious. Security and development must go hand in hand. To do so, we must continue to mobilise all the instruments we have at our disposal. The EU has doubled its support to €100 million to reinforce the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and I am proud that all our friends and partners of the Sahel joined us in these efforts.”*

Key outcomes of the High Level Conference:

- **Reinforced political support to the region:** A [Joint Communiqué](#) was adopted, reaffirming support to assist the G5 countries in bringing greater stability to the region. Important support was given to the Mali peace process: those that threaten the process can face sanctions.
- **Increased financial assistance for security:** the EU doubled its funding to the G5 Sahel Joint Force to €100 million, which aims to improve regional security and fight terrorism. The EU and its Member States together contributed to half of the international support of the Joint Force. This new funding fully meets the needs of the Joint Force and gives it the means to improve security conditions in the region.
- **Better coordination of development efforts:** with €8 billion in development aid over 2014-2020, the EU is the biggest donor to the G5 Sahel countries. The EU will play a leading role in the Alliance for the Sahel launched in July 2017. This new initiative aims to coordinate and deliver aid quicker and more efficiently in the most fragile regions and is open to all the partners of the international community.

Background

The EU uses all its tools to support development efforts in the region, notably the [‘EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa’](#) under which **€843 million** has been committed so far. The EU is also a member and key supporter of the newly formed **Alliance for the Sahel**, set up recently to coordinate existing EU and Member States development assistance better and faster in the region.

In 2014, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger set up the “G5 Sahel” group of countries to foster close cooperation in the region and

tackle the major challenges that these countries face – from extreme poverty, terrorism or trafficking of human beings, which has potential spill-over effects outside the region. Since then, the EU has stepped up cooperation with this African-led initiative to build a strong partnership on many fronts: from political dialogue, to development and humanitarian support, to strengthening security and tackling irregular migration.

The EU is itself a key security player in the region, with its 3 active Common Security and Defence Policy missions: [EUCAP Sahel Niger](#), [EUCAP Sahel Mali](#), [EU training mission \(EUTM\) in Mali](#).

Useful Links

[Joint Communiqué by the European Union, the G5 Sahel, the African Union and the United Nations](#)

[Opening speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker](#)

[Remarks \(doorstep\) by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini](#)

[Opening remarks by the 4 co-chairs of the Conference \(EbS\)](#)

[Factsheet 'The EU's partnership with the Sahel'](#)

[Factsheet \(Q&A\) 'The European Union's partnership with the G5 Sahel countries'](#)

[Photos of the Conference](#)

[ERA/ADV/2017-3 – Advice of the European Union Agency for Railways to the European Commission regarding the certification according to withdrawn TSIs](#)

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[Broadband Platform report calls for more investment to tackle the digital divide](#)

The Broadband Platform set up between the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and European Commission's DG CNECT held its second meeting on 2 February. The discussions focalised on the role of Broadband Competence Offices and on boosting broadband investment in view of the discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union.

The meeting was co-chaired by **Alin Nica** (RO/EPP), vice-chair of the CoR's SEDEC commission, and **Claire Bury**, deputy director-general of DG CNECT. They highlighted the good cooperation between both institutions through the Broadband Platform and pointed to the importance of connectivity in Europe and the main initiatives that the European Commission had adopted as part of the Digital Single Market strategy, especially the Gigabit Society

communication and the Electronic Communications Code.

Broadband Platform members – regional and local politicians from EU Member States – showed great interest in the functioning of the European Commission's [Broadband Competence Offices](#), especially the 73 regional ones, where it was noted that a lack of data at regional level represented a major problem. The inflexibility of state aid schemes was raised again as a main concern in several Member States as well as speed and reliable coverage, especially in rural areas, and the need for more expertise.

These concerns and the work of the Broadband Platform are reflected in a [report](#) prepared by **Mart Vörklaev** (EE/ALDE) that was adopted by the CoR's SEDEC commission on 21 February. The document recalls that in the current programming period EUR 14 billion is available from the ESI funds for creating broadband infrastructure. Therefore cohesion policy must continue to play a key role in boosting broadband connectivity, in combination and synergy with loan financing from the European Investment Bank and other development banks.

The document also emphasizes that broadband development plans should be developed jointly between telecommunications companies, the national level and local and regional authorities. In the interests of competition, the separation of services from the network (unbundling) is considered necessary in the same way as in the energy sector. Vörklaev's opinion will be adopted at the CoR plenary session on 22–23 March.

The next Broadband Platform meeting is set to take place in autumn 2018 around the DG CNECT's Broadband Days.

[Speech by Commissioner Carlos Moedas at European Industry Day – A New Ecosystem for Science, Start-ups and Industry](#)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I'm very happy to be at the European Industry Days again this year.

Industry is at the heart of the story of Europe. It always has been. At the beginning of the last century, after decades of fighting, Europe was torn apart.

In the aftermath, industry was the catalyst for bridging our nations

together. The European Coal and Steel Community helped us take the first steps on a path to integration. The Community formed a blue print for what would later become the European Union. It looked beyond the horrors of the beginning of the century. Because regardless of their past, the founding countries found strength by uniting around a common industrial endeavour.

And industry has been a part of our DNA ever since.

Now we are in a new century. And in a new world. Our union's industrial integrity is facing new threats.

Beyond our borders, to the west, the world's largest economy is becoming more closed and protectionist. To the east, a rising economy and a formidable competitor is making its presence known.

Nonetheless, the role of our industry in our Union remains the same. And it is getting stronger by the day.

Now we must continue our story. We need to put our full forces behind sustaining a competitive and resilient European industry.

A new wave of innovation is arriving which will bring huge opportunities for European industry.

Some call it Industry 4.0. Others call it deep tech. In Japan they call it Society 5.0. But we all agree that there will be a merging of physical and digital technologies. And that this will fundamentally change most, if not all, industrial sectors.

And I believe that Europe is in pole position for this next wave of innovation. Our scientific strengths will be a huge asset. The next wave – from AI, to biotech, to two dimensional materials – they all require leading edge science.

But of course science alone is not enough.

For Europe to lead the next wave of innovation, we need a new force of momentum.

In my mind, I see it almost like the propeller of a plane, with three strong blades: the first is **Science**; the second is **Start-ups**; and the third is **Industry**.

1. **Science** to develop the new ideas and technologies of the future.
2. **Start-ups** and SME to develop the breakthrough innovations. Combining technologies and new business models.
3. And **industry** to scale up innovations and create economic and social impact.

Without all three as strong components, we won't have the lift-off we need for the future of innovation in Europe.

So as we develop the next EU programme for research and innovation, I ask myself this:

How can the new programme make sure that Europe does not just start the race in pole position. But make sure Europe also finishes the race first?

To do this, we must support **science, industry and start-ups**. We already have an amazing success with Horizon 2020, so we need to build on this.

1- Science

Our support to science, through the European Research Council, is probably the best in the world. So we should do more.

2- Industry

I am also very proud of Horizon 2020's support to industry. The level of industry participation has gone up:

– Over this 7 years cycle we will invest more than 20 billion euro directly in industry. More than ever before..

– Nine out of ten of the collaborative projects include at least one private sector partner.

Statistics only tell one part of the story. In real terms, this participation means tangible innovation. It is making our industry stronger, smarter and more circular. It gives us amazing projects, like **Kraken**.

The Kraken project is developing one single machine with many possibilities. It can affordably produce large parts for industry up to 20 metres long. What makes it exceptional is the fact that all at once it is a digitally controlled robot, a 3D printer, a cutter and a welder!

As one machine, it can produce 40% faster than having multiple ones. And it only takes up one tenth of the space on site. Projects like these have the potential to transform manufacturing.

Think of the potential this could have for the automotive industry. For the construction sector.

There are two particular ways we work with industry: the so called PPPs and the KETs.

– The **Public Private Partnerships** have been a success. Through IMI we developed the first ever Ebola vaccine. Through Clean Sky we are developing new open rotors that will reduce CO2 emissions by 30%.

So we need to take forward the **Public Private Partnerships**. Learning from the experience in Horizon 2020.

In my view we need to do three things:

1st: Many people get confused by the number of different types of

partnerships: cPPPs, JTIs, ETPs, JPIs, ERA Nets, FET, KICs. So let's simplify this. With fewer acronyms.

2nd: Let's make these Partnerships more open. Open to new entrants. But also open to other funders. For example, why not open the Public Private Partnerships to investments by Member States, by regions, and by foundations.

3rd: We also need to create more flexibility so that, when the time comes, we will have the capacity to adapt to our current and future needs.

In terms of the **Key Enabling Technologies**.

They are our essential building blocks. With them, we have the power to create products that place us at the forefront of an advanced economy. And they underpin our global leadership in so many of our industries. Their importance cannot be understated.

Here I have to pause for a moment to say "thank you" to the **High Level Strategy Group, chaired by Mr. Ruttgers**. I very much welcome your report:

– First you have well advised us to simplify and merge some of the existing Key Enabling Technologies

-Second you have suggested to introduce two new fields; **artificial intelligence**, and **security and connectivity**.

Your report will guide us towards the next generation of KETs.

So I see a bright future for industry in the next EU research and innovation programme.

– Building on the strong industry participation in Horizon 2020;

– Making the partnerships simpler, more open and more flexible;

– Supporting the next generation of Key Enabling Technologies.

[Building on our success in the future – EIC]

But let me now turn to the third blade of the innovation propeller: **start-ups and SMEs**. This is where there is the greatest potential for breakthrough innovation. The new, high risk, innovations that merge the physical and digital in novel ways.

And this is the area where I see the greatest, and most urgent, need for improvement. And this is why I have been championing the idea of a **European Innovation Council**.

The recent report by the EIC Group provides clear and compelling recommendations on what we need to do.

Bring our various funding schemes together in a single place. Simplify them. Make them innovator centric.

There is one particular recommendation in the EIC report that makes the link between Industry and Start-ups.

Let me quote Jim Snabe, one of the EIC Group members, and the new Chair of Siemens: " Large corporates have scale, but are often limited when it comes to developing new ideas that challenge business models. A partnership between innovative start-ups and large corporates is a way to overcome this challenge "

So the EIC should be the link between the start-ups and the corporates. By helping startups to access partners across value chains. From corporates, to investors, to public procurers, and technology providers.

At the same time large corporates should be able to help start-ups to scale-up. As Jim says: "EIC is a unique opportunity for small and large companies to collaborate and leverage the diversification of Europe."

The EIC will provide the missing blade of our propeller. This will be the formula for winning the next innovation race.

But we are not waiting until 2021 for a European Innovation Council. We have already launched a 2.7 billion euro pilot phase. Making changes that are possible under Horizon 2020 rules.

One of these changes is to increase the level of ambition with prizes. We have identified six prizes. Each targeting an area of breakthrough innovation and offering a substantial prize reward.

Today, I am very happy to announce the launch of the **EIC Horizon Prize on Innovative Batteries for e-Vehicles**.

The concept is simple. We will award 10 million euro to those who can crack the challenge of developing a safe and sustainable battery for electric vehicles.

What does it mean:

- Batteries with the same driving ranges as internal combustion;
- Batteries able to be recharged in the same time you fill a conventional fuel tank.

We won't ask the how or the who. The winner will be the one who thinks outside the box and who best meets the challenge.

Developing electric vehicles is moving at break-neck speed. Much faster than any of us had anticipated. And our competition is tight. With this prize, let's put our foot on the accelerator.

In my experience, make something a challenge and you can achieve amazing results. Something you thought unfathomable.

Henry Ford, when he opened his first factory to create his famous Ford Model-

T, once said

"I am looking for a lot of people who have an infinite capacity to not know what can't be done".

His words are as perfect today as they were then. We are searching for the very same people. When it comes to innovation, that is where the real magic happens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Industry in Europe has overcome so many obstacles. It is strong.

But it will face new challenges with the next wave of innovation.

I am confident that this next wave represents a unique opportunity for European industry. To leverage Europe's fantastic science and technology. To create new ecosystems between science, start-ups and industry. And to start winning the race on breakthrough innovation. **Thank you.**