

Speech: Support for the G5 Sahel Force and Reducing Instability

Thank you Madam President. And may I thank our briefers from DPKO, from the G5 Sahel Task Force, from the African Union and from the European Union, and I think your briefing together illustrates perfectly the partnership approach that's been taken so far and which we need to continue.

The United Kingdom fully supports the G5 Sahel Joint Force. Its growing trans-border capability, coupled with its regional expertise and knowledge, are crucial to tackling the cross-border threat posed by terrorist organisations and to tackling the instability in the Sahel. Since we visited as a Council last year, a lot of work has been done building on the work already done that we saw on that visit. But efforts need to be redoubled to achieve the full operationalisation across all sectors in the coming months if the cross-border threat is going to be addressed.

As set out in the Secretary-General's report, funding mobilisation is a key issue affecting the Force. Despite many donors' generosity while pledging, the disbursement of the majority of those pledges remains outstanding, which is disrupting operations and long-term planning. In addition to our development and humanitarian funding of \$380 million over the last three years and to our contribution through the EU funds, the UK has pledged an additional \$2.7 million for infrastructure support to the element of the Niger component of the Joint Force and for helicopter-borne medical evacuation support. We intend to make that funding accessible next month, and we strongly urge all partners to make good on the financial commitments they have made to the G5 Sahel Joint Force as soon as possible.

The UK recognises the contribution of regional actors which are working towards stability in the Sahel, including MINUSMA, Operation BARKHANE and various EU missions including the EU Training Mission Mali. We strongly encourage strengthening the coordination mechanisms between these actors to ensure that efforts are not duplicated.

Madam President, in addition to these regional activities, it is important that individual countries continue to take action at a national level. In Mali, we welcome recent progress on the peace process and we hope that this momentum continues up to, and beyond, July's Presidential elections. Political efforts must be redoubled if we are to genuinely implement the Peace Agreement. And we as the Security Council should not hesitate to use the tools available, including, if necessary, sanctions against any of those who obstruct that process. We particularly urge the full participation of women in the implementation and monitoring of the Peace Agreement.

Military operations, including by the Joint Force, will only succeed if they are based firmly in a larger framework of security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian. In this regard, we urge the G5 Sahel States to take forward the establishment of the Groupe de Soutien in order to address

the challenges faced by the Sahel in a holistic and comprehensive manner. Development assistance must address the drivers of conflict, for example by addressing marginalisation or helping promote more accountable governance. And development work must be linked to the G5 Sahel and indeed to MINUSMA's operations. It's important that military operations go hand in hand with the provision of services for the population. We therefore look forward to seeing the details of a revamped Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which must have a holistic, cross-United Nations and cross-border approach to conflict prevention at its heart. This is where the Sustaining Peace concept will be tested, and let us hope we will not have to relearn the lessons that we have learnt in many other theatres.

Military action must of course be conducted in full compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law. We welcome the endorsement of the human rights law and international humanitarian law compliance framework as part of the technical arrangement between the EU, the G5 and the UN, and the G5 Sahel's commitment to implement this with the support of OHCHR and MINUSMA. Failure to protect civilians will feed extremist recruitment and put at risk future funding contributions. And I support the comments made by my American colleague about the recent incident.

Madam President, a solution that addresses the underlying causes of instability is the only way to ensure long-term security in the region. The ultimate solution will be a political one, with development assistance and military support. It must be inclusive and ensure the full and equal participation of the whole of society, including women, to succeed. It must provide economic opportunities and present an attractive alternative to extremism. This is the best way to improve the lives of those who live in the Sahel and it's the best way to improve our collective peace and security.

Thank you Madam President.