

Speech: “The UK has consistently welcomed the creation of a G5 Sahel joint force”

Mr President, I want to begin by offering my condolences to all of those affected by the attacks in Burkina Faso and Mali in recent days. The UK condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent actions of those intent on undermining stability in the region. They will not succeed. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane for his briefing today.

The UK has consistently welcomed the creation of a G5 Sahel joint force and its objectives to tackle terrorism, organised crime, people smuggling and human trafficking. And we are encouraged by the early progress that has been made since the adoption of resolution 2359 and look forward to the joint force mobilising and implementing its operations.

We echo the importance spelt out in resolution 2359 of the protection of civilians, respect for human rights and integration of a gender perspective. In his briefing, ASG Wane described the resource challenges faced by the G5 joint force. It is important that its needs are clearly set out so that the international community can explore supporting its operations and finances, including through the donor conference that we heard about today. The UK is offering training support, including through the European Union and we continue to explore what more we can do.

We welcome the recent announcement by France and Germany of the new Sahel Alliance and fully support this initiative. We urge all Council members to examine how they can further provide assistance as we ourselves are doing.

Mr President, we were reminded again in recent days of the security challenges facing the region. The international community is committed to confronting these problems and the UK believes that the joint force is an important regional component of these efforts.

In addition to military efforts, however, we need to tackle the political challenges. We welcome the progress that has been made, but we urge all Malian parties to speed up the implementation of the peace agreement and to continue their dialogue. Important steps have been taken in recent months, and we hope and believe these will continue.

Mr President, may I conclude on a personal note by thanking you and colleagues around the table for your welcome to me here today and to say how much I'm looking forward to working with you all.

Thank you.