

**Statement for Assistant-Secretary-General of Operations,**  
**El-Ghassim Wane**

**Security Council Briefing on the G5 Sahel Joint Force**

15 August 2017

**Check against delivery**

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,  
Your Excellency Ambassador Issa Konfourou of Mali.

It is my pleasure to address the Council and to provide a briefing on the activities of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, including on its operationalization, as well as on challenges encountered and possible measures for further consideration, as requested by resolution 2359 (2017), two months after this Council welcomed the creation of the Joint Force.

Monsieur le Président,  
Distingués membres du Conseil de sécurité,

The cross-border dimension of the terrorist threat in the Sahel region, as well as the serious challenges posed by transnational organized crime and its links with terrorism continue to pose a serious threat to stability, prosperity and growth in the Sahel. In Mali, attacks by violent extremist groups on national security forces, international forces and MINUSMA remain a sad reality and hamper the implementation of the peace agreement, one of the corner stones of stabilization efforts in the region. Their activities know no borders, and time and again we have seen vicious attacks also in neighbouring countries and the broader region. This past weekend, war marked by the heinous attacks in Ouagadougou and on the MINUSMA camps in Douentza and Timbuktu. Worst of all, however, are the consequences borne by the civilian population who suffers from intimidation and violence and bears the brunt of inadequate or non-existing social services that this insecurity negatively affects. Indeed, in Mali the number of state officials present in the North has decreased by 10%

compared to last year; persistent threat by extremist groups targeting school teachers, students and parents resulted in the closure of 178 secular schools. This erosion of state authority provides a fertile breeding ground for violent extremist and terrorist groups. Millions of young people in the Sahel facing job insecurity and even chronic poverty could all too easily fall prey to these groups. The situation is dire and time to identify solutions is running out.

Monsieur le Président,

Distingués membres du Conseil de sécurité,

Allow me here to acknowledge and value the contribution and sacrifice made by so many African countries to peace operations in Africa. The G5 Sahel countries are undertaking tremendous efforts in multiple theatres across vast and inhospitable terrains and with limited resources, to improve the security situation in the Sahel and to counter violent extremism and drug and arms smuggling, including in the fight against Boko Haram, and along the borders with Libya. Against this backdrop, the strong determination and commitment by G5 Sahel Member States to share the responsibility to collectively tackle these challenges head-on and to protect civilians in their respective territories, as underlined by resolution 2359, is commendable. The creation of a Joint Force to address terrorism and transnational organized crime, including through the conduct of cross-border joint military operations, demonstrates regional ownership of regional challenges and an acknowledgment that these will require collective action and unity of purpose. As such, it bears the potential of significantly contributing to the stabilization of the Sahel region and, in turn, to facilitate MINUSMA's implementation of its mandate.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Ambassadors,

Since the decision by G5 Sahel Heads of State in February this year to create a Joint Force of 5,000 military, as well as police and civilian personnel, important steps towards its establishment have been undertaken, Specifically:

- a) **Normative Steps:** Efforts have aimed at the development of the normative framework that would allow a swift operationalization of the Joint Force. Key strategic documents like the Concept of operations, the command architecture, a preliminary budget and a Memorandum of Understanding on Extraterritoriality have been adopted by the G5 Sahel Comité de Défense et de Sécurité and endorsed by the

African Union Peace and Security Council, and the scale and scope of the Force and its operations have been further defined.

- b) **Two-phased approach:** Following a two-phased approach, the Joint Force is set to initially conduct cross-border operations in three strategic sectors, and then to consolidate and enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation between G5 Sahel Member States.
- c) **Staffing:** General Didier Dacko of Mali was appointed Force commander in June and has begun assembling his team in the Force's provisional Headquarters in Bamako.
- d) **Headquarters:** The Force's permanent Headquarters in Sévaré is currently being equipped and is projected to attain initial operational capability by the end of August.
- e) **First operations:** Immediate priority will be given to the Central Sector, along Mali's borders with Niger and Burkina Faso, where the Force is planning to be ready to conduct coordinated operations in October. These operations will build on existing trilateral efforts by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in the Liptako-Gourma triangle. The operationalization and force generation for Sector East and West Headquarters, including the deployment of one company per sector to attain initial operational capability is scheduled for spring 2018.
- f) **Police and Civilian Components:** In parallel, the generation of 105 provost police officers, expected to fulfil judicial policing functions and to contribute to addressing transnational organized crime, as well as of a small civilian component, expected to be composed of three advisors to the Force Commander on human rights, humanitarian and development issues, is ongoing.
- g) **Funding and Financing Mechanisms:** The budgetary requirements to fund both the start-up of the Joint Force, including initial investments in infrastructure, staffing and operations in the first year, were set at € 423 million. Out of this sum, approximately € 234 million are projected for initial investments, € 110 million for operational costs and € 83 million for personnel related costs. Resolution 2359 bestows the primary responsibility for resource mobilization on the G5 Sahel Member States. In this light, I applaud G5 Member States' commitment to pool their resources and to contribute € 10 million each to the budget. In light of domestic economic challenges, these pledges are particularly laudable. Their joint contribution of € 50 million, in conjunction with the European Union's pledged contribution of € 50 million, as announced by Commissioner Mogherini during her visit to Bamako in June, and France's logistical and financial contribution to the Force worth € 8 million EUR, amount to € 108

million, or 25 percent of total requirements as currently defined. Indeed, The G5 Sahel countries, with support from international partners, have undertaken technical review of resource requirements, which may lead to a better delineation and fine-tuning of initially projected financial needs. The planned meeting hosted by the German and French Defence Ministries in Berlin in September will provide an opportunity to further explore options for the support of the start-up of the Joint Force, to be followed by a Planning Conference, as requested by Resolution 2359, later this year. While generating pledges and contributions to meet the requirements of the Joint Force will be critical, the setting up of transparent, coordinated and effective funding will be equally as important. We understand that, in terms of what was pledged by the European Union, efforts in this respect are already underway. I also urge G5 Sahel Member States to swiftly make good on these pledges so that they can be utilized for the further operationalization of the Joint Force.

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Given the complexity of the issues to be addressed and the multitude of stakeholders in the region, resolutions 2359 and 2364 urge the Joint Force, MINUSMA, and International Forces to ensure adequate coordination and information sharing on their operations, within respective mandates.

- a) **Command Post in Mopti:** As such, MINUSMA is currently prioritizing the establishment of a command post in Mopti, in line with its political and security mandated tasks in central Mali, which will also allow close coordination with the first focus area of the G5, starting in October.
- b) **Coordination Mechanisms:** In addition, existing coordination mechanisms between MINUSMA, French Forces, Malian Defence and Security Forces and EUTM and EUCAP-Sahel will be adapted to accommodate the Joint Force, to facilitate, amongst other aspects, information sharing needs. The Mission is also preparing the deployment of liaison officers to and from the G5 Sahel.
- c) **Support to the FAMA:** Further, and as per resolution 2295, MINUSMA is providing logistical and strategic support , within existing resources, to the Malian Defense and Security Forces, with the view to accelerate their redeployment to northern and Central Mali. In this connection, the Mission is close to finalizing a Protocol with the

Malian defence and security forces to define the modalities and scope for this support and the coordination of operations in the North and Centre of Mali.

- d) **Support to the Malian peace process:** These measures, in conjunction with MINUSMA's core mandated tasks in support of the extension of state authority across Mali, will be a further contribution to enable Malian authorities to proactively address security challenges, including through the G5 joint Force, as well as to enhance governance mechanisms and accelerate the implementation of the peace agreement. Once again, this highlights the important role all actors on the ground can play in supporting the stabilization of the region, based on their individual strengths, comparative advantages, and specific mandates.

While these developments are testament to the political will of G5 Sahel Member States to operationalize the Joint Force, significant challenges lie ahead and a number of issues still need to be addressed:

- a) Important needs in terms of not only financing and financing mechanisms, but also force generation, training and equipment, tactical support, information and communication technology, medevac and casevac capabilities, as well as camp and force protection will need to be addressed.
- b) The potential impact of force generation efforts and subsequent operations on MINUSMA's capabilities and posture must also be considered
- c) Aspects of the legal framework, such as the modalities for hot pursuit beyond the confines of each sector, need to be further defined and will require additional agreements between individual Member States and the G5.
- d) Last but not least, with regard to the Rules of Engagement, strict compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as measures to mitigate any adverse impact of military operations on civilians must be ensured, as the success of the Joint Force ultimately hinges upon the support of the population. This should also entail the creation of, inter alia, appropriate mechanisms for the handover to the competent authorities of persons apprehended by the G5 Joint Force, including children, and on information sharing mechanism on arrests and detentions.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Council,

The G5 Sahel Joint Force presents a unique opportunity to address regional challenges through a regional lense. But this opportunity can only be fully realized if, in addition to addressing the challenges I have outlined, other facets of the causes of instability in Mali and the region are simultaneously addressed. Tackling the root causes of instability in the Sahel must go beyond military action and address governance deficits, chronic poverty and unemployment, climate change and financing for development. Addressing those involved in transnational organised crime in the Sahel, imposing targeted sanctions, is also necessary. Most importantly, I would like to underscore the primacy of politics and the necessity for a sound political strategy to guide the Joint Force's activities and ensure that they are carried out in full alignment with the Malian peace process and other regional initiatives. Consequently, the overarching political framework for the Joint Force needs to be further refined and roles and responsibilities within the G5 command architecture clarified, to allow for coordinated decision-making to guide military operations, and ensure complementarity of objectives with other actors, namely international forces and MINUSMA.

Resolution 2359 calls for the rapid and effective implementation by G5 Member States and their international partners, of regional strategies. The Joint Force can make a significant contribution to the stabilization of the Sahel region, in synergy with other existing initiatives, such as the African Union's Strategy for the Sahel, the United Nations' Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the Malian peace process and MINUSMA's support thereof and the Alliance pour le Sahel. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders in the region to ensure that their approaches are streamlined and are mutually reinforcing. As such, and in order to better coordinate and refocus United Nations system-wide attention towards the Sahel, the Secretary-General recently established the Executive Committee Working Group on the Sahel (ECWG-Sahel), chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and comprising the heads of United Nations Offices, Agencies, Funds and Programmes working in the Sahel. Furthermore, to promote and further support regional ownership, the deployment of the Joint Force must be rooted in the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. The Nouakchott Process could be an effective tool to ensure both, and it is hoped that - as the concept of the force develops further - it will enjoy increasing support and cooperation from other countries in the region, including in terms of border security and intelligence sharing.

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Ambassadors,

The creation of G5 Sahel Joint Force has significant potential to contribute to the efforts already underway to stabilize the region. Once again, I applaud the G5 Sahel Member States for the considerable efforts they have undertaken towards the operationalization of the Joint Force. But we must also be realistic about the challenges that remain and the issues that still need to be addressed. Ultimately, the success of the Joint Force depends as much on the deepening of this regional partnership and governing political framework, as on the continued determination of its members towards its operationalization, as well as on the steadfast support of international partners. We are all united in our determination to fight terrorism. Let us seize this opportunity. The United Nations stands ready to contribute to this partnership and contribute to efforts in support of this initiative. Furthermore, we look forward to reporting on these efforts in October, as per resolution 2359.

I thank you for your attention.