



Security Council

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Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2391 \(2017\)](#) of 8 December 2017, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General, in close coordination with the members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger – and the African Union, to report on the activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the support provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in this regard. The Council adopted resolution [2584 \(2021\)](#) on 29 June 2021, renewing the mandate of MINUSMA, including enhanced support from MINUSMA to the Joint Force as authorized by resolution [2531 \(2020\)](#).

2. In his letter to the Security Council dated 4 October ([S/2021/850](#)), in addition to the findings and recommendations of an assessment of international support provided to the Joint Force, the Secretary-General provided a comprehensive update on (a) progress in the operationalization of the Joint Force; (b) international support granted to the Joint Force and possible measures to enhance its efficiency; (c) implementation of the technical agreement signed on 23 February 2018 between the G5 Sahel, the European Union and the United Nations, including through a detailed outline of the enhanced support provided by MINUSMA to the Joint Force; (d) challenges encountered by the Joint Force and possible measures for further consideration; and (e) the implementation by the States members of the G5 Sahel of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework of the Joint Force, the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, as well as on ways to mitigate any adverse impact of the military operations of the Joint Force on the civilian population, including on women and children. Consequently, the present report provides brief updates on the most relevant developments that have taken place since 4 October.

II. Progress in the operationalization of the Joint Force and the Executive Secretariat of the Group of Five for the Sahel

3. A comprehensive update on the status of the operationalization of the Joint Force and its police component, as well as efforts to increase the capacity and prerogatives of the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat, was provided in the letter of the Secretary-General dated 4 October ([S/2021/850](#)). The anticipated return of foreign fighters and the potential influx of small arms from Libya remain a significant



challenge for the security forces comprising the Joint Force. It is too early to ascertain how the reconfiguration of international forces in northern Mali and the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger will impact any decision to modify the Joint Force's footprint in this area.

4. From 21 to 26 October, the Joint Force conducted ad hoc Operation *Serres d'Aigle*, led by members of the Nigerien and Burkinabé battalions in response to an attack against a police post in Pétèl Kolé in Burkina Faso.

5. In accordance with the Joint Force's 2022/23 workplan, which is to be formally endorsed on 18 November during the next meeting of the G5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee, the Joint Force plans to conduct two major operations in Sector Centre per year, coupled with other ad hoc operations, as well as one major operation each in Sectors East and West.

III. International support granted to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and possible measures to enhance its efficiency

A. International support

6. A comprehensive update on international support provided to the G5-Sahel Joint Force was provided in the letter of the Secretary-General dated 4 October (S/2021/850). The most consistent and systematic direct operational support, albeit limited in scope, is currently provided by MINUSMA pursuant to Security Council resolution 2391 (2017) and its operative paragraph 13, as well as resolutions 2359 (2017), 2480 (2019), 2531 (2020) and 2584 (2021). Paragraphs 4–10 of the present report provide an overview of the support provided by the Mission. Several Member States provide bilateral support to the States members of the G5 Sahel, while others are piloting a hybrid model that combines bilateral support with a coordination role for regional entities. The European Union remains the most important financial donor.

B. Implementation of the technical agreement signed between the United Nations, the European Union and G5 Sahel States in February 2018

Life support consumables

7. MINUSMA continues to implement its enhanced support mandate pursuant to Security Council resolution 2531 (2020) to provide all contingents of the G5 Sahel with life support consumables. Since February 2018, the Mission has delivered 4.4 million litres of fuel and lubricants and 67,000 ration packs to the Joint Force, in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces.

8. Movement of cargo has started for the delivery of fuel and rations under the enhanced support model with 716,000 litres of petroleum products and 64,000 individual ration packs expected to reach all eight battalions or nearest locations by 10 November 2021.

Engineering support

9. MINUSMA continues to carry out maintenance works for the Joint Force's temporary headquarters in Bamako and has recently built three additional sanitation facilities requested by the Force Commander.

Casualty evacuation and transport

10. In October 2021, MINUSMA transported two tons of rations and conducted one casualty evacuation for Joint Force elements from Boulikessi to Sévaré (Mali).

Issues and challenges

11. Although the G5 Sahel had committed to granting tax exemptions for all supplies shipped to battalions operating under Joint Force command by contractors under the new and enhanced support model, to date only two of the five member States have issued exemption notifications, while one has informed MINUSMA that the necessary documents have been signed and should soon be submitted.

12. Battalions have yet to improve their storage capacity in order to receive the expected quantities of petroleum products and rations. This has caused delays in delivering life support consumables by contractors, who have already complained to MINUSMA about demurrage fees being imposed on them at selected ports of entry while awaiting approval to proceed with the deliveries.

13. MINUSMA has engaged the Joint Force on the above-mentioned challenges. Temporary solutions could include delivery to drop-off points in the proximity of the battalions where sufficient storage capacity exists or proceeding with segmented delivery.

IV. Challenges encountered by the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and possible measures for further consideration

14. A comprehensive update on challenges encountered by the Joint Force was provided in the letter of the Secretary-General dated 4 October (S/2021/850).

V. Implementation by the Group of the Five for the Sahel of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework of the Joint Force and the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces

15. MINUSMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued to monitor the human rights situation in relation to operations and other activities conducted by elements of the Joint Force. In this context, MINUSMA and OHCHR investigated and documented allegations of serious human rights violations, identified some progress in the protection of civilians and conducted several technical cooperation activities. MINUSMA and OHCHR also continued to engage the Joint Force leadership and the G5 Sahel to ensure that troops operating under national command or under Joint Force command, respectively, can be easily distinguished.

16. OHCHR received numerous testimonies of progress made by the Joint Force in protecting civilians from armed groups, in particular in the tri-border area, a significant improvement over the previous period. For example, after the attack of 12 May 2021 on Fantio village (Téra department, Tillabéri region, Niger), by unidentified individuals that forced 3,000 people to flee their villages and seek refuge in Téra, the Joint Force deployed to secure Fantio and its surroundings. This deployment facilitated the return of internally displaced persons. Since then, the Joint

Force has maintained a regular presence and patrols in the area to protect civilians. In another example, on 13 and 14 June, the Joint Force captured one of a group of armed individuals who had looted cattle in the locality of Dolbèl, Niger, and handed him over to the judicial authorities.

17. Furthermore, OHCHR supported the mainstreaming of relevant international standards into various instruments and initiatives of the Joint Force. The Office supported the drafting of the Statutes of the Regional Police Academy and the internal regulations of the Sahel Security College, which were reviewed and adopted during the eleventh ordinary session of the Defence and Security Committee of the G5 Sahel, held in Bamako from 24 to 27 May. Similarly, from 17 to 19 August in Bamako, it supported the revision process of the police component directive through the drafting of appropriate human rights and international humanitarian law tools. This revision process was followed by a workshop to examine the functioning, procedures, mechanisms and principles of the police component, including the transfer and processing of each case by the judicial process of each State member of the G5 Sahel concerned from 20 to 29 September.

18. Additionally, OHCHR is providing technical assistance to the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat in the ongoing development of a regional strategy on the protection of civilians during the reporting period.

19. In the area of capacity-building, OHCHR contributed to the pre-deployment training of the Joint Force's provost units in Chad, Mali and the Niger from 31 May to 9 September. This was in addition to the holding of sensitization sessions on international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law for incoming members of the joint force command post in Mauritania in September, prior to the rotation of the members in October. These sessions also contained modules on the human rights due diligence policy facilitated by MINUSMA. Also, OHCHR organized a high-level workshop in Bamako on 29 and 30 June for the leadership of the Joint Force on a human rights-based approach to the prevention of violent extremism and on strengthening compliance with applicable international standards in the planning and conduct of counter-terrorism or military operations, and facilitated awareness-raising sessions on the compliance framework for members of the Joint Force Command Post at the sectoral level in Chad and the Niger from June to September.

20. In accordance with the need to continually enhance adherence of the G5 Sahel to the compliance framework, OHCHR organized an after-action review workshop in Bamako on 18 October, during which eight of the outgoing members of the joint force command post assessed the level of implementation of the framework and proposed 15 recommendations, which would be considered for further action, as appropriate and necessary.

21. MINUSMA and OHCHR continued efforts for strengthened implementation of the human rights due diligence policy with regard to MINUSMA support to the Joint Force, in line with the technical agreement between the G5 Sahel, the European Union and the United Nations, pursuant to resolutions [2391 \(2017\)](#), [2531 \(2020\)](#) and [2584 \(2021\)](#), including through supporting the G5 Sahel. During the reporting period, MINUSMA completed 18 human rights due diligence policy risk assessments for the Joint Force's requests for United Nations support. Subsequently, 13 measures were identified to mitigate identified risks and enhance human rights compliance and accountability of the Joint Force. These measures included the provision of updated information by the Joint Force on progress in internal investigations and judicial proceedings in relation to grave human rights violations on specific cases, the development of a standard operating procedure on casualties incurred during operations, the adoption of a soldier's manual on appropriate conduct and the timely sharing of information concerning major

operations, as well as measures adopted pursuant to the standard operating procedure on the capture, detention and transfer of detainees.

VI. Observations

22. The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel is a critical initiative that remains crucial for addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the Sahel. As the security situation in the region continues to deteriorate and the asymmetric threat proliferates, it is our duty and collective responsibility to embolden, support and empower local and regional initiatives in a sustainable and effective manner.

23. It remains my conviction that a dedicated United Nations support office funded through assessed contributions is the most effective approach to provide sustainable and predictable support to the Joint Force. At the same time, support models should be designed to promote regional ownership and enhance the capacity of the Joint Force to become self-sufficient. A fully autonomous G5 Sahel with the capacity to support its various entities, including the Joint Force, should be our shared objective and guide our decision-making. I would like to reiterate my call for the establishment of a dedicated political forum to help pave the way for enhanced collaboration and dialogue among key stakeholders with a view to enhancing the autonomy and ownership of the G5 Sahel, ensuring a shared understanding of the most pressing challenges ahead and agreement on how to address them, as well as the identification of next steps by the States members of the G5 Sahel to further operationalize the Joint Force and enhance its operational effectiveness, with the support of international partners.

24. Regardless of any support provided, addressing governance shortfalls remains critical to ensuring lasting stability in the Sahel. Military and security-centred solutions alone will not suffice. I am encouraged by the efforts of the Joint Force contingents to engage the local populations in their area of operations. Lingering challenges in distinguishing between operations conducted in a national capacity and those conducted under the command of the Joint Force need to be addressed and I urge the States members of the G5 Sahel to take appropriate action. Similarly, it is critical that the Joint Force continue to build on its efforts to prevent and mitigate human rights violations and to protect civilians. I call upon the States members of the G5 Sahel to intensify efforts to foster inclusion and to promote human development, resilience and good governance and to champion human rights. The international community must support these efforts with resolve and all available resources. The United Nations remains deeply committed to working with the African Union and its subregional partners to support governance-related efforts in the region.