



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8903rd meeting

Friday, 12 November 2021, 10.25 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco	(Mexico)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	India	Mr. Ravindran
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Niger	Mr. Maman Sani
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Said
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Roscoe
	United States of America	Mr. Mills
	Viet Nam	Mrs. Tra Phuong Nguyen

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force (S/2021/940)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

21-33470 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force (S/2021/940)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Chad to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; and Ms. Fatimata Ouilma Sinaré, President of the Burkina Faso chapter of the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the Economic Community of West African States Space.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/940, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): Since the previous meeting of the Security Council on the Sahel (see S/2021/484), the situation in the region has remained extremely volatile. Insecurity and instability are a major impediment to growth and development, and the civilian population is paying the highest price. Every day, many lives are lost to terrorist attacks. Millions are displaced, children can no longer go to school and primary health care remains inaccessible to many, even as the pandemic rages on. The armed and security forces of the member States of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) are meeting this threat with determination and courage in a situation where the odds seemed stacked against them. They deserve our solidarity. Today I wish to pay tribute to them, acknowledge their sacrifice and salute their bravery and strength.

Combating terrorism is among the greatest challenges of our time. The way that the international community responds and addresses the root causes

will be a decisive test. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, many fear being left behind while old systems break down. We are only beginning to understand this phenomenon and how we can halt the rise and spread of terrorist movements.

In that context, the important decision of the G-5 Sahel member States to take in hand their security challenges by creating the counter-terrorist Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel is a significant accomplishment. Since it was first deployed, in 2017, the Joint Force has continued to sustainably ramp up its operations despite major challenges. Next week, the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee is set to approve the Joint Force's 2022-2023 workplan, which contemplates several major operations in each of the Joint Force's three sectors. In recent weeks, the Joint Force has also demonstrated its ability to quickly launch an ad hoc operation — Operation Serres d'Aigle — in order to respond to an imminent attack on the people of Burkina Faso.

Nevertheless, as the Secretary-General noted in his letter to the Security Council (S/2021/850), the Joint Force continues to face significant challenges. The return of foreign fighters from Libya, domestic challenges and political uncertainty, as well as major shortfalls in equipment and capacities, weigh heavily on the armed and security forces of the Sahel that make up the Joint Force.

(spoke in English)

In his letter dated 4 October, the Secretary-General presented you, Mr. President, with the key findings of an assessment carried out by the Secretariat, under the lead of the Department of Peace Operations. During that exercise, the assessment team evaluated the operationalization of the Joint Force and possible avenues for enhanced support.

The Joint Force is now at a crossroads, and there is a risk that it will lose the gains that have been made. The Secretary-General is clear, in both his letter and his recent report (S/2021/940), that the Joint Force remains a vital part of a collective security response to the multiple challenges facing the region — terrorism, weak border security and trafficking in persons, illicit goods, weapons and drugs. It is the collective responsibility of the international community to support the commendable efforts of the G-5 Sahel member States.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has spared no effort in supporting the Joint Force within the framework of its mandate. In that regard, I would like to express gratitude for the European Union's crucial financial support, which has made the support of MINUSMA possible. Since the previous briefing of the Council on the Joint Force, the Mission has undertaken all the necessary steps to ensure that contractors can deliver life-support consumables to all seven battalions deployed under the Joint Force command.

However, there are limits to that support model. It relies on donor financing, the future of which is, as per its definition, unpredictable and cannot meet all the Joint Force's needs. We remain convinced that only a dedicated support office, funded through assessed contributions, can provide the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel with the support that it needs and that would also enable it to become more effective and enhance the scope and reach of its work.

At the same time, enhanced support also requires strengthened collaboration and continued efforts by the G-5 Sahel States to enhance ownership and improve institutional governance and dialogue. Setting up a support office, should the Security Council decide to do so, would require the full cooperation of all relevant entities of the G-5 Sahel, including the Defence and Security Committee and the Executive Secretariat, and further efforts to strengthen and clarify civilian oversight and command and control and to reinforce mechanisms to protect human rights. In the immediate term, the G-5 Sahel States could also capitalize on comparative advantages and pool and share their resources and military equipment in support of the Joint Force. In his letter, the Secretary-General also proposes the establishment of an advisory office, which would provide technical and expert assistance to the Executive Secretariat of the G-5 Sahel in a number of cross-cutting areas, including the pooling and sharing of resources. I would like to emphasize that the dedicated support office is our first recommended option, and that the advisory office is our second-best option in the case that the Security Council is not able to assist the support office. The advisory office could also assist with efforts to strengthen institutional governance within the G-5 and, as such, it would be an important step towards the setting up of an enhanced full support package in the medium to long term.

Important strides have been made by G-5 Sahel States in the prevention and mitigation of human rights violations by members of the armed and security forces while carrying out counter-terrorism operations, as well as in protecting civilians through enhanced patrolling. The establishment of the Human Rights and Conduct and Discipline Compliance Framework and the strict application of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces have been instrumental in that regard. Of course, much still needs to be done in that area. But, once again, the establishment of a dedicated support office would provide an opportunity to scale up not only logistical and operational support, but also efforts to protect civilians, promote human rights and ensure greater coherence among military, political and development efforts.

Security efforts alone are not sufficient to address the crisis in the Sahel. A holistic approach that honours the primacy of politics and addresses governance deficits and the root causes of poverty and exclusion is required. It should also seek to provide opportunities and fulfilled lives for the many young people in the region. I would therefore like to reiterate the call of the Secretary-General for the establishment of a dedicated political forum, comprising representatives of the G-5 and other international and regional organizations, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the United Nations and the European Union, as well as members of the Security Council. Such a forum would both promote regional ownership and foster enhanced international support, while ensuring that the operations of the Force are aligned with important political processes, including the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.

Many donors and partners provide bilateral support to the G-5 Sahel member States. Those contributions are valuable and have helped to fill important capabilities gaps and shortfalls. However, in the light of the serious crisis unfolding in the region, a comprehensive and collective approach is needed to support a collective security initiative.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chad, who is participating in this meeting on behalf of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Mrs. Baroud (Chad) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate Mexico on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November, and thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation extended to Chad to participate in this important meeting devoted to the operationalization of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force and the situation in the region. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his relevant report (S/2021/940) and Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Assistant Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for his insightful briefing on the report and the situation of the G-5 Sahel.

The security situation in the Sahel remains very worrisome, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his report. In addition to the terrorist threat facing our States for several years, the lack of a solution to the multidimensional crisis in the Sahel unfortunately gives free rein to the proliferation of other emerging opportunistic challenges due to existing tensions, which persist despite the efforts of States of the region and their partners to curb them.

The intercommunal conflicts that are multiplying and causing loss of life in several G-5 Sahel States are fuelled by the security crisis against a backdrop of competition for increasingly scarce resources as a consequence of the climate crisis, whose effects are felt throughout the Sahel due to the region's structural and ongoing vulnerabilities.

The absence of coherent responses with a real impact on the ground, based on the specificities and vulnerabilities of the region in the context of global climate action, as well as the unfulfilled promises to countries in difficult situations, such as those of the G-5 Sahel, in the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, add to the disillusion and despair of the local populations.

In addition, the lack of significant progress in ensuring security by eradicating terrorist attacks, despite the efforts of the G-5 Sahel States, and the presence of external forces could undermine the action of States and their partners and cast doubt over, or even question, their ability to root out terrorist groups, who will not hesitate to take advantage of the situation, if they have not already done so.

The return of mercenaries and foreign fighters expelled from Libya is an additional element in an already very dark picture. If such a return is not done in an orderly manner under the aegis of the United Nations and in close coordination with the States concerned, within a proper disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, the repercussions of that return risk further destabilizing the Sahel and undermining the efforts of the States of the region, supported by partners, to secure and stabilize the region.

The G-5 Sahel States are therefore now more convinced than ever that the G-5 Sahel is a unique, relevant and beneficial initiative, emanating from the States concerned, and remains the only framework for action capable of providing the most appropriate solutions to the challenges facing our subregion. The G-5 Sahel States are also convinced that, if it has adequate resources commensurate with those serious challenges, the G-5 Sahel has the capacity to eradicate the terrorist threat and bring about security and well-being for its people, to the benefit of the entire region and the world. While the G-5 Sahel is an initiative of its member States, it is also an instrument for international peace and security, for security is indivisible. The security of the Sahel and Africa is also the security of the world.

The Joint Force and the G-5 Sahel economic pillar, the Priority Investment Programme, are carefully considered, pragmatic, realistic and feasible responses, based on the reality on the ground and the real needs of each country. Those instruments have been developed through extensive consultations with and support from international partners. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force and its Priority Investment Programme therefore remain the most appropriate solutions to the problems facing the Sahel region. They require consistent support from all friends of the Sahel to achieve their objectives, which constitute our shared goals.

It should be noted that important progress has been made in the context of the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. As for the development component, it is awaiting the additional resources promised by partners for the implementation of Priority Investment Programme projects. Those projects, which are highly anticipated by our populations, address the areas of infrastructure, governance, resilience and security and are necessary for improving the living conditions of the G-5 Sahel populations.

As the Secretary-General notes in his report, major challenges remain. Nevertheless, our States have demonstrated the political will to tackle those challenges in order to achieve the full operationalization of the various G-5 Sahel mechanisms. That operationalization must be conducted in accordance with the overarching guidelines, standards and norms set out by our Heads of State, particularly in the area of human rights, as agreed with our partners, and to which our countries are committed. We all share the will and ambition to pursue our common goals at the national level and within the framework of our organization, the G-5 Sahel.

In that regard, I would like to stress that, in order to ensure effective governance of the G-5 Sahel and its optimal institutional capacity, structural reforms have been undertaken at the Executive Secretariat, formerly known as the Permanent Secretariat. During the G-5 Sahel Summit held in N'Djamena on 15 February, the Heads of State instructed the Ministerial Council and the Executive Secretariat to accelerate the finalization of the reform process in order to provide the organization with an effective institutional structure for the implementation of its strategy. The reform of the Executive Secretariat has already been completed, and there is also a process under way to revise the G-5 Sahel convention of establishment to take into account the implications of that reform.

It is also worth recalling that a trust fund to receive contributions to the Joint Force was established in 2018 and is fully operational, with the Executive Secretariat bearing responsibility for its management mechanism. That means considerable efforts are under way, with concrete results already having been achieved in terms of the strengthening of the governance and institutional capacities of the G-5 Sahel. We reiterate once again the firm commitment of the G-5 Sahel, in accordance with the instructions of its Heads of State, to carry out structural reforms of our organization to render it fully effective and able to fully assume, in accordance with the established standards, its responsibilities in the pursuit of the G-5 Sahel's objectives.

With regard to the implementation of the human rights due-diligence policy, considerable efforts have been made and progress achieved. However, challenges remain, and our commitment to continue in our efforts and collaboration with our partners is steadfast. We reassure our partners that we will spare no effort to reach the required standards. We are relying on their support and assistance to achieve that.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General and welcome the relevance of its analysis and conclusions. The progress noted reflects the ongoing efforts decided by the Heads of State. The reforms aimed at strengthening the institutional capacities and efficiency of the organization are being finalized. We are counting on the support of our partners to achieve that universally sought-after objective.

With regard to the two options presented by the Secretary-General in his report on support for the Joint Force (S/2021/850), the final decision lies with the Security Council. Nonetheless, we would like to thank the Secretary-General once again for his analysis and conclusions. We welcome his consistent position on the need to ensure sustainable and predictable funding for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, which our Heads of State have repeatedly stressed at every opportunity. We reiterate once again our appeal in that regard to the Security Council. The G-5 Sahel States also fully share the Secretary-General's conviction that a United Nations support office would be best positioned to provide the appropriate support that the G-5 Sahel needs.

Therefore, we reiterate our call to the Security Council to create a support office so as to provide the G-5 Sahel Joint Force with sustainable, predictable and reliable funding. That would enable the Joint Force to put an end to funding concerns and instead focus entirely on its fundamental mission, namely, to bring security to the region in order to create a climate conducive to development where the populations fully enjoy well-being and their human rights.

Finally, I would once again like to thank all bilateral and multilateral partners for their support to the G-5 Sahel and its member States. Alongside the efforts of the member States themselves, that support has contributed to the progress made by the G-5 Sahel. The continued and increased support of partners is essential for the achievement of the G-5 Sahel's objectives.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Sinaré.

Ms. Sinaré (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Mexican presidency for convening today's meeting on this topic.

The security crisis prevailing in the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) region has exacerbated the significant gender inequality that already existed, underpinned by several sociocultural beliefs and barriers that are deeply rooted in tradition.

In terms of gender-based violence and other harmful practices, the Niger has the highest rate of forced and early marriages in the world, while the rate of female genital mutilation in Mali stands at over 80 per cent among women and girls between 15 and 45 years old. In Burkina Faso, women make up just 14.96 per cent of the National Assembly, while approximately 56 per cent of children between the ages of 3 and 17 do not attend school due of a lack of security. In the Lake Chad basin region, women suffer sexual abuse, abduction and rape. In Mauritania, women are severely underrepresented in senior political, administrative and economic decision-making posts. Internally displaced women find themselves in such difficult circumstances that some of them have to sell themselves in order to meet basic survival needs.

Women have therefore come together across platforms and networks at the regional level, including the G-5 Sahel Women's Platform; the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the Economic Community of West African States Space, which I am representing here today; the West African Network of Young Female Leaders; and the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel.

Through those civil society organizations, action plans are being developed to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and other resolutions in favour of women and young people at the State level. There is also specific work being carried out within my organization, including a declaration made on peace and security during the coronavirus disease pandemic in August 2020. We also conducted regional campaigns for peace in the Sahel, which we are continuing to promote online. In that context, we have created profiles and videos to be disseminated on social media. I have made all of those elements available to the Security Council in the hope that they will be shared broadly among members.

We are seeing more interventions led by women, who are enlisting alongside their male counterparts as part of self-defence forces in order to help defend their communities and their families against various forms of violence.

But it does not stop there. We have women who have been manipulated or convinced either by external forces or the context to influence men and young people to join armed movements. These women are helping the armed movements by mobilizing and facilitating the

warehousing of supplies and by providing information to these fighters who are our enemies on the ground.

To address this, we have formulated some recommendations that we would like to bring to the Security Council's attention.

First, substantial technical and financial support for the development, dissemination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of national strategies and action plans for the implementation of the resolutions for women and young people must be provided.

Secondly, substantial technical, material and financial support for women's and young people's civil society organizations to implement long-term, positive impact projects and ensure effective and sustainable socioeconomic and political empowerment for women and girls.

Thirdly, efforts must be undertaken to initiate, encourage, motivate and facilitate dialogue between armed movements and State and regional authorities in order to silence the weapons in the Sahel region.

Fourthly, substantial technical, material and financial support must be provided to ensure quality education and health for all in our respective States. Finally, we must encourage and provide substantial technical and financial support for conflict prevention actions in the G-5 Sahel region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Sinaré for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the various briefers for their briefings.

The situation in the Sahel continues to be of great concern. We all saw this together during the Security Council's visit to Mali and the Niger. Despite the success of operations in recent months, the civilian population and local forces continue to pay a heavy price in the face of terrorist groups. The 2 November attack near Bani Bangou in the Niger caused the death of several dozen civilians. The international community's resolute action and strong commitment are more essential than ever.

The creation of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force is an essential response by

the countries of the region to the threat. I would first like to recall why France supports the establishment of a United Nations support office for the Force. The terrorist threat does not respect borders. Only cross-border military cooperation, such as the Joint Force, is capable of responding to it. The latest operations have helped to reduce the terrorists' hold and strengthen the bond of trust between the armed forces and the local population. The European Union (EU) and its member States are providing very substantial support to the Force in terms of equipment. The EU also finances the support mechanism implemented by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

The African Union authorizes the deployment of the Force every year. West African countries have contributed \$12 million to enable it to carry out Operation Sama 3 from March to June. This political and financial support is substantial but insufficient. To plan and conduct operations over time, the Joint Force needs predictable and sustainable support, which should be provided by a structure that has the capacity, including financial capacity, to organize a logistical support chain. The United Nations has this capacity. It also has the legitimacy. But the Security Council must take its responsibilities.

In his letter of last October (S/2021/850), the Secretary-General again called for the establishment of a United Nations support office for the Joint Force funded through assessed contributions. This is also the wish of the African States members of the Security Council. The Secretary-General has indicated that this structure could be operational within one year. This office would offer solid guarantees on human rights. Its cost would be limited, especially if it was decided initially to concentrate support on Force-led cross-border operations alone.

France therefore calls again on the members of the Security Council to support the establishment of this office. Those who have reservations about this proposal have not in fact offered any credible alternative. Meanwhile, terrorist groups are gaining ground and the situation is deteriorating. It is therefore time for the Council to respond to the urgency.

Support for the Force is only one aspect of the global response we must provide to the challenges in the Sahel. Together with its partners, France will pursue the approach defined at the Pau and N'Djamena

summits. This involves complementing military efforts with equivalent actions in terms of capacity-building, State redeployment, development and humanitarian aid. France is restructuring its military presence but will remain militarily engaged for the benefit of all Sahel countries that continue to request it, and we will continue our consistent support for the development of these countries. In 2020, the French Development Agency committed more than €600 million to the Sahel.

To be effective, these actions require the full cooperation of the States concerned. France fully supports the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States in Mali, including the decisions taken at the 7 November summit. We again call on the transitional authorities to do their utmost to organize elections within the time frame to which they themselves have committed.

Mr. Maman Sani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1), I wish to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, for his briefing. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Chad, Her Excellency Mrs. Ammo Aziza Baroud, for her participation in today's briefing on behalf of the current Chair of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), as well as Ms. Fatimata Ouilma Sinaré for her briefing.

Our recent trip to the Sahel demonstrated the importance of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and its potential to wean the region from armed terrorist groups, which, without a robust response, will create a new global epicentre of instability and humanitarian emergencies. Civilians are the primary victims of this violence. The latest attack occurred on 2 November in western Niger. The A3+1 condemns this cowardly and barbaric attack on defenceless civilians and extends its condolences to the people and the Government of the Niger.

In the light of that situation, we welcome the increase in the number and pace of operations undertaken by the Joint Force and the operationalization of its police component. The execution of operations code-named Sama 3 and Serres d'Aigle is an encouraging illustration in that regard.

Given this state of affairs, the downsizing of the Barkhane force and the Chadian contingent in the central sector, and the possible flow of combatants and small arms owing to the withdrawal of foreign fighters

from the Libyan theatre, make it even more urgent that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and the allied international force fill the gaps. Without this, the atrocities against civilians will continue and intensify.

The A3+1 takes note of the report of the Secretary-General under consideration (S/2021/940) and his letter dated 4 October 2021 on options for supporting the G-5 Sahel Joint Force (S/2021/850). We fully share the Secretary-General's conviction that the creation of a United Nations support office dedicated to the G-5 Sahel Joint force remains the most appropriate option. It has the advantage of providing the Force with predictable funding, strengthening its operational planning capacity and providing it with a human rights protection framework. The need for action on this proposal is urgent. There is no time for the international community to procrastinate on providing support options to the G-5 Sahel countries.

The A3+1 welcomes the fruitful exchanges that the members of the Security Council had with the authorities and the Commander of the G-5 Sahel Force during their recent visit to Mali and the Niger. We hope that the lessons learned from those meetings will have helped to dispel the few reservations expressed by some delegations about the option of establishing the support office dedicated to the Joint Force.

The A3+1 welcome the crucial support provided by MINUSMA to the Joint Force, including in Mali, in the context of the stabilization and gradual restoration of the authority of the State and the integrity of its territory, particularly in the centre and the north of the country.

With respect to the implementation of the humanitarian rights compliance framework, the significant progress made by the Joint Force in developing and implementing the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework is to be commended, including the establishment of the Civilian Casualty and Incident Tracking and Analysis Cell and the integration of provost components into all combatant units of the Joint Force, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report. In that regard, the A3+1 commends the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their support to the Force in this area.

Given the complexity of the challenges faced by Sahelian States, the response to insecurity must not be only military force; it must be holistic. We believe it is important that Mali make clear progress in its transition to civilian rule. The success of that transition is crucially important to overcoming the threat of terrorist groups.

Democratic legitimacy, the effective and fair management of diversity and delivering local development projects are key aspects, among others, to restoring security to the Sahel. A coherent and coordinated implementation of United Nations system interventions, in support of national Governments' efforts in those areas, will be critical for success. We therefore call on all development partners of the G-5 Sahel countries to keep their commitment to fill the funding gap of the security and development strategy and its Priority Investment Programme, which focuses on governance, resilience, security and infrastructure.

Owing to the combined effects of insecurity and climate change, the humanitarian situation in the Sahel has also deteriorated, with just under 30 million people in need of protection according to the United Nations. Intensified efforts to address the needs of those vulnerable people are necessary if we are to avoid creating a breeding ground for the recruitment of youth by armed terrorist groups.

In conclusion, and as stated by the Secretary-General in his most recent report on the issue,

“[t]he international community has a moral obligation and shared responsibility to support the member States of the G-5 Sahel in their commendable efforts to bring peace and sustainable development to the region” (S/2020/1074, *para.* 56).

They have shown their political will and commitment by establishing the Joint Force to combat this terrorist threat, which is of concern to all humankind.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Under-Secretary General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing on developments in the region. We also thank the representative of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) for his briefing.

Russia agrees that, unfortunately, the situation in the Sahel during the reporting period did not only not improved, but in many ways deteriorated. Terrorist activity and inter-ethnic and intercommunal conflict

increased again, which has had a very negative impact on the security situation in the region. Fighters have killed dozens of military personnel and hundreds of civilians. Those are horrifying figures.

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons has increased, which creates challenges for food security. All of that makes it imperative for States in the region to take urgent steps to address acute socioeconomic problems and strengthen their State institutions and protect human rights. If they fail to do so, the conditions for radicalizing the population, including the youth, will only increase.

We support the efforts of the G-5 Sahel States to deploy the Joint Force to combat terrorism and organized crime, which has already become an important part of regional security. We note with satisfaction the counter-terrorist operations by the Joint Force during the reporting period. We also note the need for further coordination within the Joint Force itself and with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and other military presence in the region.

It is clear that the full functioning of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force depends on two important factors: ensuring its stable and predictable funding and providing appropriate transport and logistical support. In that connection, we support the assistance provided to the Joint Force by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, in accordance with its mandate set out in resolution 2584 (2021). At the same time, we recognize that the difficult conditions on the ground, asymmetrical challenges, long distances and communication difficulties require more sustained international support to the Force. In that regard, we stand ready to hold a substantive discussion in the Security Council on the proposals in the October letter of the Secretary-General regarding increased assistance to the G-5 Sahel Force through the United Nations. Both options — either the creation of a small advisory office at the Joint Force secretariat or the creation of a full-fledged support office — require a clear understanding of their timing and feasibility, effectiveness, the costs involved and the sources of funding. We look forward to further dialogue with our partners on those issues.

On the whole, we are convinced of the importance of further coordinated steps by Africans and the international community to counter the scourge of

terrorism in the Sahelo-Saharan region. We trust that the initiative of the African Union to develop, together with regional organizations, an African standing force in the Sahel will bear fruit.

Russia is closely following the development of the situation in the region. Military-technical assistance is being provided to a number of countries, and military and police personnel are being trained. We intend to continue that work.

Mr. Ravindran (India): I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing today. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Chad for presenting the views of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). The Chadian contingent has been playing a key role in the G-5 Sahel, and we value the inputs provided on the practical challenges that the G-5 Sahel is facing on the ground. I also thank Ms. Fatimata Ouilma Sinaré for her insights.

The security situation in the G-5 Sahel countries, particularly in Mali and the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, continues to be a matter of serious concern. Attacks by terrorists and armed groups have increased in recent months. The accounted civilian toll from those attacks in the Niger alone is estimated to have surpassed 600. Earlier this month, 69 people were killed in the western region of Tillabéri in the Niger. In June, more than 100 people were killed in a village in Burkina Faso.

The recent report of the Secretary-General on the threat caused by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known as Da'esh (S/2021/682), also highlighted that terrorism in Africa continues to expand in strength and in its area of control. We heard the same from Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, two weeks ago in the Council's meeting on the situation in Mali (see S/PV.8893). I would like to recall the Council's recent visit to Mali and the Niger and the interactions with the leadership and various stakeholders, who unequivocally mentioned that addressing the threat of terrorism is a precondition for achieving sustainable peace in the Sahel region. Countering terrorism in the Sahel is not just the responsibility of the countries of the region, it is an obligation of the international community as well.

For the past three years, the Council has been grappling with the issue of support to regional security initiatives such as the Joint Force of G-5 Sahel and has remained divided on the ways and modalities to support regional security initiatives. Unfortunately, the Council's indecisiveness has allowed terrorist groups to expand their area of influence.

The threat of terrorism in the Sahel is real. The countries of the Sahel region look to the Security Council to enable them to more effectively fight terrorist groups.

In that regard, I would like to make three points.

First, we all acknowledge that the security situation in the Sahel has become more complex and volatile in the recent years. The role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) continues to be critical in supplementing the efforts of the Malian authorities to bring stability to the volatile northern and central regions of the country. At the same time, the operational support provided by MINUSMA to the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel has proved insufficient. It is therefore important that traditional peacekeeping be complemented by regional operations to neutralize terrorist groups and entities.

Secondly, the Council consistently reiterates its support for African solutions to African issues. The Council must walk the talk and support the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, including by providing the Joint Force the necessary financial support through United Nations-assessed contributions.

Thirdly, the Council has discussed how to best support the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. We have witnessed the limitations of the logistical support MINUSMA can provide. That approach has burdened MINUSMA, thus adversely affecting the implementation of its core tasks. The Secretary-General is now presenting two proposals — first, an advisory office to the G-5 Sahel Executive Secretariat and, secondly, a dedicated United Nations support office in the Sahel, a suggestion that the Secretary-General has been making for the past few years. We need to seriously look into both of those options.

In conclusion, the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel is the best hope for the long-term regional ownership of the maintenance of peace and security in the vast Sahel region. The Joint Force needs sustainable, predictable

and adequate support to deal with terrorist and armed groups. The countries of the Sahel have shown their resolve and determination to take on terrorism. We need to support them unequivocally. Failure to do so could result in serious political and security implications in the region and beyond.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank the briefers for their insights, not least those of our civil society briefer, Ms. Fatimata Ouilma Sinaré. Let me again express Norway's deep concern about developments in Mali, which affect not only the country, but also the region and regional cooperation efforts. We continue to strongly support the leadership and peace diplomacy of the Economic Community of West African States.

Let me also express our solidarity with our colleagues from the Niger after the horrific attacks last week. That is just the latest example of a deeply disturbing security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel. We also know that violent armed groups primarily operate in border areas in order to evade accountability. That is alarming as it poses the risk of this menace spreading even farther.

Given the concerning context, the Council spent the recent trip to the Sahel listening for solutions. We understand the need for flexibility, sustainability and predictability for the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Moreover, as a regional response to regional challenges, the Joint Force merits our attention and support. It is for those reasons that Norway supports the Secretary-General's proposal of a support office for the Joint Force. We look forward to discussing that further, including how a support office could best supplement other and future bilateral and multilateral support.

We know that the Joint Force operates in a challenging context. Nevertheless, any support that involves the United Nations must fully comply with the United Nations due diligence policy. Military operations must uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Norway remains deeply concerned about attacks against civilians, including allegations of sexual violence against women and girls, reportedly also committed by members of the Joint Force. It is commendable that some such perpetrators have been prosecuted or removed from their positions. We encourage the scaling up of efforts to monitor and ensure accountability in order to prevent such incidents in the first place. The Force must become more aware of the impact of their operations

on civilians and to prevent civilian harm. To that end, Norway continues to support the implementation of the compliance framework of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Lastly, but importantly, military and security measures alone will never be enough to ensure stability and sustainable development in the Sahel region. As Norwegian author Olav Duun once put it: “evil cannot be killed with an axe”. Security cannot be the goal; it is merely a means to an end. We need to maintain a holistic focus on good governance, human rights, climate change adaptation and basic services. In the end, those are the things that matter for people in their daily lives.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Ms. Sinaré for their briefings, as well as the Permanent Representative of Chad for setting out her view.

It is clear again today that violence is spreading. Civilians are continuing to suffer and humanitarian access is becoming even more challenging amid growing political uncertainty in Mali and Chad, as well as worrying trends in regional cooperation.

As others have said, just last week, we again saw terrorist incidents in the Niger’s Tillabéri region, leading to a significant loss of life. We extend our sincere condolences to the families of the victims in the Niger and to all of those living in conflict zones across the Sahel.

As I stated when the Council last discussed the Sahel in May (see S/2021/484), it is evident that any military response to the problems of insecurity in the region needs to be integrated into broader efforts to improve governance and, indeed, to address the socioeconomic challenges and underrepresentation and mistreatment of women, as set out so clearly today by Ms. Sinaré. The key to that in Mali is a timely democratic transition, as the Council discussed at the end of October (see S/PV.8893). During the visit to the region last month, the Council had the opportunity to hear first-hand about the engagement of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with the Malian transitional authorities in order to encourage their development of a strategy for the protection of civilians in central Mali. The Council also heard about the Niger’s efforts to address insecurity and the impact of climate change and to support access to education, especially for girls.

The United Kingdom will support the work of the Niger’s High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace, aimed at improving the resilience of local populations in the tri-border area and promoting dialogue between communities and State representatives in order to help resolve disputes. We also support and encourage Government engagement with humanitarian, stabilization and development partners in relation to internally displaced persons and refugee returns in order to ensure that returns are safe and sustainable.

There can be no sustainable peace and security in the Sahel without the protection of human rights and compliance with international humanitarian law. We continue to urge all Governments to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses when they arise, to prosecute those responsible and to ensure respect for international human rights standards and judicial processes in the course of counter-terrorism operations. In that regard, we welcome the announcement by the Malian authorities of the three cases brought before the military tribunal in Bamako this month. It is an important step forward in the fight against impunity.

We recognize the efforts of the G-5 Sahel nations and their partners to address security concerns and tackle cross-border threats. We support the aims of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force as a key part of the solution to the challenges in the Sahel. We have noted the Secretary-General’s letter of October (S/2021/850) regarding alternative support models for the Joint Force, which we had hoped would propose options for bilateral and multilateral support mechanisms other than just the United Nations. As we have consistently said, we have a fundamental concern with United Nations involvement in offensive, national counter-terrorism operations. We therefore do not believe that the United Nations is the right vehicle to provide durable support to the Joint Force. But we stand ready to continue to engage with partners to discuss possible alternative solutions that would enable the Joint Force to build its own capacities towards a self-sustaining basis over time. I reiterate that that is only a part of the solution. In parallel with that, there needs to be sustained effort on human rights compliance and investment in broader political efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict.

In conclusion, we know the gravity of the challenges faced by the G-5 Sahel countries. For our part, we are proud to be supporting efforts to stabilize the region, including through our deployment in MINUSMA. We

remain committed to helping to address the Sahel's challenges, not only militarily, but also through a greater focus on stabilization, governance and development. We look forward to continuing constructive discussions with all partners in the interests of the long-term peace, stability and development of the region.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I thank the briefers for their overviews on the latest developments in the Sahel region and on the operationalization of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force.

Estonia continues to be extremely concerned about the volatile and deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region despite ongoing efforts by the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and the international security forces. The most affected by that instability are civilians. Estonia condemns in the strongest terms all attacks against civilians, including the recent attack in the Niger's Tillabéri region, which left 69 people dead.

Restoring an effective and credible State presence across the territories of the States of the region is a key element in ensuring the protection of civilians. It is important to continue efforts to re-establish not only the security presence, but also police and judicial institutions.

The fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel can succeed only if it is a truly joint effort by the national, regional and international security forces. Estonia commends the work of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States in supporting the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We are encouraged by the efforts of G-5 Sahel Joint Force to enhance its internal coordination, and we call for further concrete steps to clarify the command lines and share relevant information in a more effective manner.

The question of how to organize effective international support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force remains at the centre of our discussions. It is positive that the European Union's financial support has allowed the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to provide operational and logistical support to the Joint Force. Moreover, Estonia fully acknowledges calls by the region's States to ensure more predictable and sustainable funding for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We have taken note of the support options presented in the Secretary-General's letter of 8 October (S/2021/850), including the proposed dedicated United Nations support office for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

We believe that the time is ripe for the Security Council to begin considerations on how to best mandate that support model.

An integral part of all counter-terrorist efforts is compliance with the human rights and international humanitarian law principles. Estonia remains concerned about the continued reports of human rights violations allegedly committed by the security forces during counter-terrorist activities. While we welcome the timely announcements of the conduct of investigations by the Joint Force and the region's States, we strongly encourage that all such investigations be conducted thoroughly and fully. It is essential to investigate all human rights violations and abuses and to hold the perpetrators, regardless of their status, fully accountable.

The Sahel region faces a number of challenges. While military efforts are often at the forefront, it is crucial to address the underlying issues that often exacerbate the existing grievances. We must continue to take into account the negative effects of climate change in the Sahel. There needs to be a constant focus on the empowerment of women to ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of society. In that connection, we are grateful for the testimony provided by Ms. Fatimata Sinaré earlier in the meeting.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Estonia's commitment to achieving security and stability in the Sahel region. We will continue our contributions through personnel to MINUSMA, the French-led Operation Barkhane, the Task Force Takuba and the European Union (EU) Training Mission in Mali and financial support to the EU Trust Fund for Africa.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by reiterating the expression of condolences by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland to the victims and families who were affected by the heinous attack in the Niger last week. That incident highlights the urgent need for enhanced efforts to protect civilians across the Sahel. I would like to thank Mr. Lacroix and Ms. Sinaré for their briefings this morning. I particularly welcome the presence of Ambassador Baroud at this meeting.

Regional cooperation is essential to achieving peace and security in the Sahel. We recognize the continued efforts of the States of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) in promoting peace and security in the region, supported by contributions from the

European Union. We take note of reports of improved protection of civilians in the cross-border region. Given the high number of civilian deaths, we encourage further work in that regard. We welcome the options proposed by the Secretary-General to support the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The sustainability of the Joint Force depends on sustainable and predictable funding. We look forward to working constructively in the Council to find a solution. In that regard, the voices of the G-5 Sahel member States are vital. A shared vision for the future of the Sahel, and of the Joint Force itself, is an integral part of meaningful progress.

(spoke in English)

Military action alone will never be enough to end insecurity in the Sahel. The root causes of instability must be addressed through a holistic and integrated approach.

During the Security Council's recent visit to the region, we met with political and civil society leaders and heard first-hand how conflict is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel. That crisis is compounded by multiple challenges, including climate change and food insecurity. We know that millions of ordinary Sahelians have been forced to flee their homes. Security incidents, attacks and kidnappings are a tragic daily reality for civilians in the region. Access to basic social services, livelihoods and assistance remains a critical challenge.

As we heard today in Ms. Sinaré's eloquent testimony, women in the Sahel face many difficult challenges, from underrepresentation at the official and political levels to the ongoing and increasing risks of sexual and gender-based violence. We salute the efforts of civil society and, indeed, the Economic Community of West African States in working to address such challenges, which we know are of constant and daily concern.

We also raise additional concern in relation to the closure of schools, which undermines educational opportunities for an entire generation of children in the region. In particular and depressingly, a whole generation of young girls are being deprived of the opportunities they need so as to grow into the educated young women that Ms. Sinaré spoke of who can support their societies, not just at the community level but also at higher and official levels, in addressing challenges.

A strategically focused and operationally effective G-5 Sahel Joint Force has a key role to play. Protection of civilians, respect for the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law are essential to achieving sustainable peace. Ensuring and demonstrating the safety of civilians is vital in rebuilding trust between populations and national and regional security forces. The greater inclusion of women, including at senior levels, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of those operations. More must be done to improve women's representation within the Joint Force at all levels.

We welcome progress made by the Joint Force in integrating human rights into its structures and operations. If not underpinned by human rights, counter-terrorism and peacebuilding efforts are ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst. I commend the G-5 Sahel member States for their efforts in that regard and thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for its support.

That work is imperative to the future of the Force; so, too, is accountability. We encourage the Force to increase efforts to gather and share information on the impact of operations and, crucially, to differentiate national operations from those of the Joint Force. Adherence to the human rights due diligence policy is vital. The continued vigilance of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in that regard is also welcome.

Ireland remains deeply committed to supporting the countries of the Sahel in their efforts. In addition to our troop contribution to MINUSMA, we will continue to work bilaterally, through the European Union and the United Nations, and with partners across the region to pursue peace and security.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing. I also listened carefully to Ms. Sinaré's statement and welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Chad at this meeting.

According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/940), the security situation in the Sahel region is turbulent, plagued by ever-spreading terrorist forces, where frequent attacks target countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. A Security Council delegation visited Mali and the Niger last month, through which it was able to further deepen its understanding of the grim security situation in the region.

In recent years, the five Sahelian countries have proactively strengthened themselves by joining hands to deepen cooperation and launch several rounds of counter-terrorism operations, which have played an important role in eliminating the influence of terrorism and maintaining stability and security in the region. China wishes to register its appreciation in that regard.

As the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) faces considerable difficulties in terms of logistics support, China supports the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to continuously improve its logistical support to the Joint Force. According to the Joint Force's military action plan, MINUSMA should formulate corresponding logistics support programme to secure the needs of the Joint Force as far as possible.

China encourages the European Union to increase its financial support to the Joint Force. Regarding the reorganization and downsizing of military deployments by the relevant countries, it is necessary to strengthen communication with the countries of the region so as to avoid the emergence of a security vacuum.

China attaches great importance to the concerns of the countries of the region regarding funding issues. China supports the Joint Force in obtaining sustainable and predictable financial support, as well as in finding a solution acceptable to all parties as soon as possible that not only suits the reality of the region and meets the needs of the Joint Force, but also takes into account the concerns of all stakeholders. China will continue to provide financial and material support to the Joint Force through bilateral channels.

Regional counter-terrorism actions cannot be separated from an enabling external political environment. Mali occupies an important position in cooperation on regional counter-terrorism. The international community should provide constructive support for Mali's political transition while encouraging all Malian parties to resolve their difficulties through dialogue; promote preparations for the general elections in line with the reality of the situation in Mali and the wishes of the Malian people; and maintain Mali's political stability.

The withdrawal of foreign fighters from Libya should be conducted in an organized and orderly manner. In that process, all parties concerned should strengthen information exchange and coordinate their actions with countries in the Sahel region to prevent

the withdrawal from exerting any negative impact on the situation in the region. As is highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General, the weakening of the State authority and the displacement of the population in the region created opportunities for terrorist forces to gain strength and ground.

The international community should fully realize that political and military means alone cannot solve the security challenges facing the Sahel region. It should focus on helping the countries of the region to restore State authority; enhance the capacity of Governments; achieve sustainable development; enhance social inclusion and cohesion; solve the root causes of terrorism and extremism; and promote peace through development.

At the end of this month, China and African countries will jointly hold the eighth ministerial meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Through that meeting, China stands ready to increase its support to the countries of the region in such areas as fighting the coronavirus disease, post-epidemic reconstruction, trade and investment, poverty reduction, development and tackling climate change.

China stands ready and willing to work with the international community to contribute to the long-term stability of the Sahel region.

Mrs. Tra Phuong Nguyen (Viet Nam): I thank all the briefers for their insightful briefings and I appreciate the presence of the Permanent Representative of Chad at our meeting today.

On the political and security situation, we note with concern the political incidents in certain areas of the Sahel region in the past six months. Therefore, we call on all stakeholders in the countries of the Sahel, including Mali and Guinea, to exercise utmost restraint and promote reconciliation through dialogue and consultation. We stress the need to conclude transitions in a timely and constructive manner and to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and young people in that process.

The security situation remains of great concern in the region, especially on the borders between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, where terrorism, intercommunal violence, extremism and transnational organized crime are on the rise and threaten the lives and livelihoods of the people. We condemn all attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and defence

and security forces in the regions, including the recent incident in the Niger.

We support greater commitment to tackling those challenges. We therefore join other States in reiterating the importance of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5) Joint Force's efforts aimed at combating terrorism and maintaining peace, security and stability in the region. The States' roles require further cooperation and adequate resources from the United Nations, regional organizations and the international community, so that the Joint Force can fulfil its mandate. Furthermore, we stress the urgent need for the safety of peacekeepers, including those working for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The rise of extremist attacks and deteriorating security have shown how dangerous the Mission's working environment is today.

On humanitarian issues, food insecurity, climate change, the restricted movement of civilians, denial of essential services, displacement, intercommunal conflicts and the coronavirus disease pandemic, inter alia, have added layers of complexity to the region. Almost 29 million Sahelians — an increase of 5 million in comparison to last year — are now in need of assistance and protection.

In Mali, the pain that local people suffer as a result of violence and killing is indescribable. It is therefore compulsory to remove all restrictions of civilian movements, provide unhindered access for humanitarian aid and ensure funding and essential services for vulnerable people in the region. All parties must comply with international human rights law and international humanitarian law and protect civilians, especially women and children.

Finally, we call for a holistic approach to security, humanitarian and sociodevelopment challenges in the Sahel, including measures to address the impacts of climate change. We reiterate our call for greater focus on social services and sustainable economic development, as well as the inclusion of women and youth in those areas.

We emphasize the need for the African Union, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States, MINUSMA, and the European Union to collaborate with the Joint Force in addressing the aforementioned challenges and promote peace, security and stability in the region.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, Ambassador Baroud and Ms. Sinaré, for their briefings. It is especially important that the Security Council continues to hear from civil society representatives like Ms. Sinaré, so we thank her.

Like other Council members, the United States is alarmed by rising violent extremism, intercommunal violence, the growing humanitarian needs and certain cases of democratic backsliding in the Sahel. The tragic attack in the Niger that killed 69 civilians only deepens that alarm. We join others in offering our condolences to the delegation of the Niger and to the families of those who lost loved ones in this horrific attack.

On behalf of my delegation, I want to begin by thanking our fellow Council members — the Niger, Kenya and France — for organizing such a successful Security Council visit to Mali and the Niger. In Mali, most of us sent a strong message that elections must occur according to the time frame agreed upon by the transitional Government and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with elections to be held on 27 February 2022, as previously announced. In the Niger, the delegation was warmly welcomed by the highest levels of leadership, including the President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, and my delegation looks forward to meeting the President again under the Niger's Security Council presidency next month.

The United States welcomes efforts aimed at supporting the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), to advance stability and development in the region. We are committed to continuing our strong bilateral partnership with States members of the G-5 Sahel by providing equipment, training and advisory support for critical capability gaps. Reflecting this commitment, the United States has, since 2017, obligated more than \$588 million to provide security assistance and other support for countering violent extremism to the five countries of the G-5 Sahel. We believe this assistance has helped to strengthen capacity and effectiveness while supporting efforts to address and protect human rights. We ask partners to honour their pledges to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as the individual militaries, and join us in finding ways to do more with key Sahelian partners.

One of the main messages the Council took away from the trip to the region is that G-5 Sahel countries

need increased international support. Specifically, the G-5 Sahel countries have requested help with education, health, addressing climate change and bilateral security assistance. We look forward to working with our fellow Council members to identify additional bilateral and non-United Nations multilateral options to fill the critical gaps. Let me be clear: the United States continues to believe that the United Nations — regardless of the mechanism — is not an appropriate vehicle to provide logistical support to the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The Joint Force is a coalition of security forces mandated to conduct counter-terrorism operations primarily within their own borders. It is not a multilateral force on foreign soil mandated as a peace operation.

Our focus at the Security Council must remain squarely on political solutions and tying security responses to effective political strategies. Our collective efforts in the Sahel must go beyond a military response, as others have noted, and address problems with governance.

We continue to support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and its mission goals of supporting Malian authorities in holding elections on time, implementing the Algiers accord and protecting civilians. MINUSMA's principles, goals and exit strategy are not aligned with an offensive, counter-terrorism-mandated operation such as the Joint Force, nor should they be. The path to lasting stability also lies in pursuing justice and accountability for human rights violations and abuses through legitimate efforts to prevent and investigate such incidents. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force must fully implement its human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights needs the right resources to this end.

Peaceful and timely transitions of power to democratically elected Governments in Mali and Chad are essential to long-term prosperity and stability in the region. Democratic transitions will also allow many Governments to resume bilateral and regional support currently restricted because of military coups. In Mali, we support the leadership of ECOWAS on the political transition. We welcome the Security Council's continued support for the decision by ECOWAS stating that the transitional Government in Mali is conditioned on holding presidential and legislative elections, as reaffirmed through the Security Council press statement agreed on 4 November (SC/14687).

We also welcome the statement issued by the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS on 7 November regarding the situations in Mali and Guinea. We are concerned that the transitional Government in Mali did not present a timetable to ECOWAS by the end of October, as it had committed to doing. We call on the transitional Government to publicize an election timetable to ensure inclusive and transparent processes in preparing for and holding free and fair elections, including the full, effective and meaningful participation of women and youth.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Mexico.

I of course thank the other members of the Council, Under-Secretary-General LaCroix, the Permanent Representative of Chad and Ms. Sinaré, for their briefings this morning.

The Security Council's visit to the region allowed us to see the scale of the challenges it faces. At the same time, it gave us the opportunity to see the progress that can be achieved when international cooperation is combined with strong governance and democratic legitimacy, as is the case in the Niger. It is undeniable that insecurity is its main problem, fuelled by the growing activity of terrorist groups and confrontations between various communities over access to resources, among other problems.

We deplore the increase in the frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks in the tri-border area, and I take this opportunity to express our condolences to the Representative of the Niger for the victims of the 2 and 4 November attacks in the Tillabéri region.

Mexico is convinced that this security problem requires much more than a military response. We agree with the various points made at this and past meetings on the need to address the root causes of the conflicts in the Sahel. Ms. Sinaré's briefing has also shown us the importance of including women as agents of change.

We note with concern that initiatives to strengthen the civilian component of the regional strategy have not made significant progress. In that context, my delegation wishes to highlight two issues.

First, Mexico takes note of the Secretary-General's proposals to provide predictable and sustained support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. In that regard, my country reiterates its

readiness to participate constructively in discussions to respond to the legitimate needs of the countries of the region and particularly, those of the Joint Force. We do not understand the reservations expressed in that connection. If all terrorist acts indeed threats to international peace and security, as established in resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001), the United Nations has a role to play in addition to bilateral efforts.

Mexico insists that, in any future negotiation on this issue, United Nations support for the Joint Force must be contingent upon political assurances from the Member States, in return, with two objectives.

First, any assistance lent to the Joint Force must be utilized in a manner that is fully compliant with the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It is critical that the members of the Joint Force receive training in that regard, as we indicated during the Council's visit to the Niger. The same is true for the members of mechanisms that investigate and ensure accountability when there are allegations of human rights violations.

Furthermore, it is essential that the members of the Joint Force take the necessary political and operational decisions to strengthen the Force's multinational character and align the level of commitment of its members in order to achieve common objectives.

Moreover, any Council decision concerning the Joint Force should consider the experience of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in providing logistical support to

the Joint Force so as to anticipate problems in the implementation of the Force's mandate.

The second point I wish to highlight is the need to give priority support to reforms that contribute to improving governance in the countries of the region. For international cooperation in the Sahel to bear fruit — whether in terms of security or to promote an ambitious peacebuilding and democratic governance agenda — the political commitment of national Governments is indispensable.

Mexico also considers it essential to support the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel to improve the living conditions of the population. Coordination among the various actors operating in the Sahel is vital if we are to reach the 29 million people in the area who are in need of some kind of assistance or protection.

Finally, my country calls on Mali and Chad to commit to the restoration of constitutional order, in accordance with their commitments to the international community. The Security Council, for its part, must continue to support the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States, particularly in Mali.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.