



Security Council

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Letter dated 9 June 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritania, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, the Niger (on behalf of the three African members — the Niger, South Africa and Tunisia — and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video teleconference on “Peace and security in Africa” convened on Friday, 5 June 2020.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nicolas de Rivière
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations,
Jean-Pierre Lacroix**

[Original: English and French]

I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to address the Council in the presence of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

My statement is aimed at taking stock of the support that the international community, and more particularly the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), have provided over the past few months to operationalize the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. As members are aware, at the request of the Council the Secretariat has just carried out an assessment of MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force. The conclusions of the assessment are taken into account in the Secretary-General's latest report on MINUSMA of 2 June 2020 (S/2020/476).

Since the last meeting of the Security Council on the Sahel on January 15 (see S/PV.8703) and despite the current context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the fight against terrorism and the matter of development in the Sahel region continue to mobilize the international community at the regional, continental and international levels in order to stem the violence and create a conducive environment for peace and prosperity. Efforts to mobilize additional resources continue, while the African Union and regional organizations continue to provide political support to the G-5 Sahel's fight against terrorism and poverty.

Since last year, there has been tangible and encouraging progress in the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel, notably through the reform of its permanent secretariat and the development of management and decision-making tools. At the operational level, progress has been made in strengthening the Joint Force, through force generation efforts, the revision of its strategic concept of operation and the operationalization of the Sahelian Threat Analysis and Early Warning Centre. In addition, the establishment of a joint command mechanism in Niamey has strengthened coordination with other international forces. All of those efforts have resulted in the Joint Force launching a major military operation, known as Sama, which is currently under way and progressing well.

Against that background, MINUSMA's support to the Joint Force through the provision of water, rations and fuel, as mandated by the Security Council, has also been critical. In the past months, the consumption and disbursement rate of the support provided by the Mission — so generously funded by the European Union — has increased from 21 per cent to almost 50 per cent. I am pleased to note that, on 3 June, the European Union Ambassador to Mali and Special Representative Annadif handed to General Namata Gazama, Commander of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, its new temporary headquarters. The support of MINUSMA and the European Union ensured a rapid completion of the temporary structures.

The provision of life support consumables by the Mission has been proved particularly useful, and at times critical, to sustaining the Joint Force. However, and as outlined in the reports of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force (S/2020/373) and on Mali, the limitations of the current support model present significant obstacles. Transporting rations and fuel to Joint Force contingents remains the biggest challenge. MINUSMA has done its utmost to accommodate requests within the framework of its mandate and the technical arrangement. The Mission has added

additional drop-off locations for life support consumables within Mali as close to the Joint Force's areas of operation as possible. However, MINUSMA is operating at maximum capacity and cannot go further in its support to the Joint Force with the mandate and resources with which it has currently been bestowed.

As requested by the Council, the Secretariat carried out an assessment. It concluded that international support to the Joint Force remained crucial, but that the current support model was not suited to addressing the Joint Force's transport and equipment shortages. In that regard, the assessment defined different options, ranging from a comprehensive support package to some more modest adjustments to the existing system. The comprehensive support package includes a dedicated, separate United Nations support office providing full logistical and operational support, funded by United Nations assessed contributions or at least supported through a dedicated trust fund. Those would be temporary arrangements to allow the G-5 Sahel Joint Force to build its own capacities.

A second category of options aims at addressing immediate challenges in the short term. The options include strengthening the G-5 Sahel Joint Force's capacity to procure and provide life support for its contingents, as well to conduct medical evacuations outside of Mali; readjusting the current support model to allow other partners to contract their own freight-forwarding companies for the delivery of life support closer to the Joint Force's areas of operations; authorizing MINUSMA to undertake the delivery of life support supplies beyond its area of operations; expanding MINUSMA engineering support.

In line with the outcome of the assessment, I would like to iterate once again the Secretary-General's call for a comprehensive support package, funded by assessed contributions. That would not only allow for predictable and sustainable support, it would also make it easier to pursue a long-term strategy to phase out the support and render the Joint Force autonomous. In addition, it would free up MINUSMA to dedicate itself completely to supporting the peace process and the stabilization of central Mali. Expecting MINUSMA to do more in addressing transportation gaps would require expanding the Mission's mandate. Any authorization for MINUSMA to do more in support of the Joint Force would require additional resources and consistent and continuous fundraising. The generous financial support of the European Union has been critical to sustain the support MINUSMA has provided to the Joint Force so far, and I express my profound gratitude to the European Union in that regard. I call on the international community and the other donors to come forward and support this important cause.

The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is on the right track, but there is still a long way to go. Strengthening the Joint Force is only one strand in the comprehensive international approach required to tackle the root causes of instability in Mali and the Sahel region. Improving governance, eradicating poverty and protecting the human rights of all citizens, including the most disenfranchised, remain critical and more needs to be done to ensure that such efforts are given the same weight as military operations.

As a result of the political commitment at the highest level of its contributing States, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force has laid the groundwork to integrate international human rights law and international humanitarian law obligations into the planning, conduct and review of military operations. However, efforts remain necessary to fully uphold this commitment. Preventing, mitigating and addressing violations during operations are crucial, and the United Nations remains committed to continuing its support to the G-5 Sahel in addressing challenges, in close coordination with other stakeholders. Strengthening the police component of the Joint Force would be an important step not only in improving the oversight of military operations, but also in sustaining efforts by linking them to State-building, support of the justice sector and

prison reform and efforts under the human rights compliance framework. I welcome the launch of the Partnership for Stability and Security in the Sahel in that regard. I also urge the Joint Force and the G-5 Sahel member States to spare no effort for the full establishment and implementation of the different pillars of the human rights compliance framework.

The past six months have been particularly challenging. The COVID-19 outbreak has added another layer of complexity to the already highly complex and challenging security situation in the Sahel. We are seeing attempts by terrorist and other groups in the region to capitalize on the pandemic in order to undermine State authority and destabilize Governments. Attacks on national and international forces, as well as civilians, who continue to bear the brunt of the instability, continue unabated. Innocent lives are lost every day. Schools remain closed, and many are denied access to the most basic social services.

Even in the best circumstances, it will take years to rebuild affected communities in the Sahel and sustained efforts to ensure that nobody is left behind. In the face of such loss and devastation, we cannot be passive.

The international community can be successful in the fight against terrorism only if we stand united and follow a comprehensive, joint approach. Despite the difficult start to this year, there have been some positive developments that give us hope. I welcome the establishment of the Coalition for the Sahel following the summit in Pau in January, which provides a broader framework to coordinate security, development and governance initiatives in the region. It will remain important that we continue to lend our support to regional initiatives, including the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that we have a shared responsibility for the Sahel. We must each deliver our part of a promise to help provide much-needed relief and empowerment to the populations across the region who need it most. Let us together strive for a solution that is the most effective and practical and that makes it possible to bring about lasting change, to the benefit of the most disenfranchised.

Annex II**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritania,
Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed**

[Original: French]

Allow me first to welcome the initiative of the French presidency to organize this important Security Council meeting, which takes place in an international context strongly marked by a health crisis that is unprecedented in the recent history of nations, as well as an increasingly worrying security situation in the Sahel with the upsurge in terrorist attacks.

We are very pleased at the interest the Security Council has shown in the Sahel, and since we want to build a relationship of trust with the Council, the duty of loyalty requires me to speak in the language of truth and frankness.

The security situation in the Sahel is visibly deteriorating with unusual consistency. For several years, the evil alliance of terrorist and drug-trafficking groups has been ravaging the Sahel region with successive malignant tumours.

The Sahel is already structurally weakened by the heavy burden of climate change effects that we have long been the only ones to suffer: recurrent droughts ruining our fragile agro-pastoral economies, depopulating our lands and casting those in need of ongoing support into the periphery of our major cities.

Insecurity and underdevelopment have taken such a heavy toll in the Sahel to the point that it is deeply scarred. Violence spreads to new territories every day. However, let there be no mistake: the security threat that is sweeping the Sahel is not only a local problem, but is of global dimension and scope. It therefore warrants a comprehensive response.

We are still legitimately requesting the Security Council to consider the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. But because we will never be content to do nothing while waiting for that, we have undertaken, each individually and as the five countries together, a robust effort to recover lost territories and assist those in distress.

Our objective is not only to restore military control over the land taken from us by the terrorists but also, above all, to return to the areas devastated by the occupying criminals, to restore, as I said, the protecting State and the public services so essential to people's lives, in particular schools and hospitals.

The response is currently being undertaken simultaneously on all fronts, from security to development, but the challenge is huge and the gains are always tentative and reversible. We and our allies need to have staying power, the patience to persevere and the steadfastness to succeed. Several initiatives are under way on the ground, which have been intensified since January 2020 in the devastated tri-border area.

In that regard, I mention with pride the Chadian army's resounding successes against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad area in the past few weeks. This shows that the terrorists can be defeated and that fear has now changed sides. We Sahelians have the special trait of resilience. This remarkable ability to cope will lead us to victory against the terrorists. We have the stubbornness and the patience of those who well know that they are right, even if they are unable to prove it today. We will defeat them because the future belongs to us.

With regard to development, the Coalition for the Sahel is a relevant political, strategic and operational framework, which is structured around four pillars and

focuses efforts on the fight against terrorism, military capacity-building, support for the restoration of the State in conflict areas and development aid.

This is also an opportunity to thank all multilateral and bilateral partners for their support to the G-5 Sahel countries. By way of example, I will mention France, the United States of America, Germany, the European Union (EU), Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the African Union and the United Nations. However, mobilizing funds to finance of the Priority Investment Programme, which is critical to our populations, is not yet commensurate with expectations.

The Mauritanian Presidency realizes the extent to which the operationalization of the Joint Force is a complex, long-term undertaking. Today we have put aside any doubts about the relevance and the capacity of the Force, which is tangible proof of the readiness of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel to jointly counter terrorism in their common area.

The support of our partners in all its forms and cooperation with the United Nations Mission are therefore crucial in every respect. In addition, the implementation of the tripartite agreement among the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the European Union training mission in Mali and the G-5 Sahel Joint Force will significantly contribute to strengthening the capacities of the Force. Such technical arrangements should be continued in the future in order to strengthen and develop cooperation in that area of activity.

This is an opportunity to commend the close collaboration between the Joint Force and MINUSMA. The inauguration two days ago of the third Joint Force command post in Mali, built by MINUSMA with funds made available by the EU, demonstrates not only the resilience of the Force but also the firm commitment of the international community at its side.

Since we are a few days away from discussing the report of the Secretary-General on the mandate renewal of MINUSMA (S/2020/481), on behalf of my G-5 colleagues, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our firm support for MINUSMA and for the extension and strengthening of its mandate. Its added value and contribution to stability and peace in Mali are well recognized.

In conclusion, the Sahel is today a region where almost all world's problems converge. It is determined to recover and become a region of promise and opportunity.

Annex III**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve**

[Original: English and French]

I thank the briefers for their statements.

Belgium remains a committed partner of the five countries of the Sahel and of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and its Joint Force. We share their determination to fight insecurity and promote development.

Belgium's initiative is also part of the many efforts of the European Union (EU) in the region, as demonstrated by a new edition of the annual meeting of the EU and the G-5 at the level of Foreign Ministers on 12 June, following the EU-G-5 summit in April. We are also partnering in the launch of the Coalition for the Sahel and the Partnership for Stability and Security in the Sahel, and the Belgian defence forces are engaged in several missions in the region, in partnership with the G-5 national forces.

Despite the still very worrying security and humanitarian situation, there is good news, such as the increase in security operations under the aegis of the Joint Force in recent months and the revised concept of operations. We also recognize the support role played by France in that regard. The good news includes the inauguration just a few days ago of the Joint Force headquarters in Bamako, built by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and funded by the EU. We hope it will be used and will contribute to the effectiveness of future operations. The achievements also include the increased capacity and autonomy of the G-5 executive secretariat. More equipment has been delivered and more is on its way. Nevertheless, since we joined the Council last year, we have always encouraged the G-5 not to condition progress on the availability of resources or equipment. For example, the crucial police component is still in its early development, and we believe further operationalization depends little on additional resources or equipment.

That said, let me stress that military operations and development projects alone will not defeat terrorism in the Sahel, as they have not done anywhere else in the world. Since the terrorists make political demands, we believe that countering them needs political commitment and ownership at the highest levels to strengthen the democratic institutions of the Sahel, advance political solutions, where possible, and challenge the terrorist narrative. Efforts to fight the stigmatization of particular ethnic groups, provide basic services, including security, and combat impunity, whether financial or criminal, should probably be the highest priority.

Another important issue is the allegations of extrajudicial killings by security forces of G-5 countries. These allegations are very serious and warrant a thorough investigation rather than outright rejection. Let me assure the Council that Belgium understands the enormous challenges and fragility of the security forces of our G-5 partners. However, let me be clear that our call for respect for the rule of law and basic human rights is not merely philosophical. In our view, it is an indispensable condition for defeating terrorism. Progress on security and development is of course essential but, if human rights and the rule of law are not respected, such progress will remain transitory and terrorism and insecurity will continue to prosper.

To conclude, I would like to encourage both the five countries and the Joint Force to strengthen the implementation of the human rights compliance framework, supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as this is one of the main tools that can help prevent possible

violations in the future. In that context, I would like to acknowledge the fact that most G-5 countries have accepted such assistance by opening OHCHR offices in their countries in order to fully benefit from its support. We encourage the countries that have not yet done so to accept OHCHR's offer to open offices in their country.

Annex IV

Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun

I thank Under-Secretary-General Mr. Lacroix and Foreign Minister Mr. Cheikh Ahmed for their briefings.

As a good friend of African countries, China has been actively supporting the efforts of the Sahel countries to maintain peace, security and stability and to promote development in the region. We are encouraged to see that the political situation in the Sahel remains generally stable, and we commend the efforts of countries of the region in that regard. Meanwhile, we also share the concerns of countries in the region over the serious security challenges posed by terrorism, transnational organized crime and intercommunal violence. Having carefully studied the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/373) and listened to the interventions of the briefers, I wish to share the following points.

First, continued efforts should be made to support political solutions to regional issues. China maintains that African issues should be resolved in an African way and through an African-led and African-owned process. We hope that the international community will continue to respect the political will of the people and the sovereignty of the countries of the region and to support the important role of regional organizations, including the African Union.

Secondly, continued efforts should be made to tackle the challenges arising from terrorism and transnational organized crime. We still remember that in March, the Security Council held an open debate (see S/PV.8743) and adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2020/5) on countering terrorism in Africa. We hope that the international community can strengthen effective coordination and increase its support and investment in the fight against terrorism in Africa. The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel has played an important role in maintaining regional peace and security. China supports the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) providing logistical support to the Joint Force within its mandate and the strengthening of its mandate with the necessary financial assistance.

It is also our view that the United Nations agencies should provide more support to Sahel countries to strengthen capacity-building in countering terrorism. China has provided ¥300 million in aid to counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel and the Joint Force, and will continue to help.

Thirdly, efforts should continue to eradicate the root causes of regional instability. Underdevelopment is one of the main causes of many issues in the Sahel. We hope that the international community will provide more support to countries in the region in eradicating poverty and improving health care, education and employment so that they can achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of the African Union in a more timely and effective manner. China is actively assisting countries the region, especially on infrastructure and connectivity, and by offering scholarships for study in China, among other means.

Fourthly, the pandemic is still severely affecting the Sahel region and the African continent. It is the strong hope of China that the international community will work closely with African countries in fighting the pandemic and addressing its negative social and economic impacts. In this regard, our support should go beyond mere political slogans, and be implemented through concrete actions.

We need to support MINUSMA in strengthening its capacity to fight the pandemic. President Xi Jinping has promised that China will work together with African countries in fighting the pandemic. We have promised to establish a cooperation mechanism for our hospitals to pair up with 30 African hospitals, and to make any vaccine a global public good, while making sure African and developing countries are among the first to benefit. We hope that, through our joint efforts, we will be able to bring hope to the Sahel and Africa as a whole. China will always be a strong supporter of African countries.

Annex V**Statement by the Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic, José Singer Weisinger**

We express our sincere appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritania for their insights.

Let me begin by expressing our deepest condolences to the families and colleagues of the two peacekeepers in Mali, one from Cambodia and the other from El Salvador, who recently died as victims of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The world is facing a major threat, which is impacting us profoundly and testing our resilience at all levels. For this reason, it is now more important than ever that we secure the gains accomplished thus far to bring about peace and security in the Sahel.

We understood and supported, as a matter of principle and common sense, the plea for a ceasefire in all conflicts during the pandemic, bearing the hope that the pandemic threat would somehow raise awareness of certain groups and lead to halt in their operations. However, the sad reality is that the Sahel region continues to be destabilized by terrorist groups and intercommunal violence.

It is deeply disturbing to witness the dramatic deterioration of security in the Sahel region, in countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, resulting from terrorist attacks on civilians and security forces, as well as the surge in intercommunal violence, exacerbated by the same terrorist groups, which claimed the lives of more than 4,000 people in 2019 in those three countries alone and created a dire humanitarian situation, with 14.7 million people in need of assistance and more than 1.4 million internally displaced across the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

Another matter of concern is the increased coordination and cooperation among terrorist groups in the Sahel, which are currently taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase their attacks and usurp State authority, as well as their connection to transnational organized crime syndicates to finance their operations. This confirms that our efforts to accomplish peace and security in the Sahel region must continue and be strengthened.

It is encouraging to hear about the progress made in the reporting period in operationalizing the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, which allowed it to carry out a number of operations, and in implementing several necessary regional and international security initiatives launched to support the Force and counter-terrorism efforts in the region, such as Task Force Takuba, under Operation Barkhane, supported by a number of countries, including Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, the Niger, and the United Kingdom; the Coalition for the Sahel; as well as the efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the G-5 Sahel to increase the number of troops.

Challenges, on the other hand, do remain and should be promptly addressed to pave the way to the full operationalization of the Joint Force, demanding greater coordination at the tripartite level — among the European Union, the Joint Force and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) — to tackle shortcomings in the model of support used by MINUSMA.

As we all know, the security situation in the Sahel region is a complex one, demanding a comprehensive approach. We therefore commend the initiative of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel region, through the Coalition of the Sahel, to focus on four pillars: efforts to combat terrorism; capacity-building for defence

and security forces; support for the re-establishment of State presence; and development assistance.

We encourage the leadership of the Sahel to guarantee the proactive and broad participation of women and youth across these pillars and other efforts towards the consolidation of peace and security in the region.

Finally, we highlight the importance of accountability and adherence to human rights and international humanitarian law, especially within the framework of counter-terrorism strategies, to strengthen the credibility of and receptiveness to all efforts.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson

I would like to thank today's briefers for their valuable input and the French presidency for convening the meeting.

The growing number of terrorist attacks against civilians and national and regional security forces in the Sahel region is extremely concerning. More attacks often result in the withdrawal of the State presence from already fragile areas, which in turn negatively affects the humanitarian situation on the ground. We must therefore work even more efficiently together to strengthen the State and security presence in those areas most affected. In this regard, we commend the efforts of regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, to coordinate and further mobilize joint counter-terrorism operations.

It is encouraging that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) has conducted an increased number of operations over the past six months and strengthened its capabilities. The terrorist threat is often cross-border in nature and therefore needs to be addressed in such a manner. It is positive that the G-5 countries took the decision at the beginning of the year to allow for more flexibility when conducting Joint Force operations across State borders.

In order to make counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel region as effective as possible, we need to strengthen cooperation among the various actors operating in the region. Estonia closely monitors the developments in the Sahel and contributes to restoring security and stability in a number of ways, including by contributing personnel to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the French-led Operation Barkhane, and making financial contributions to the European Union Trust Fund for Africa. Furthermore, we are part of the recently created Task Force Takuba, which will seek specifically to tackle the terrorist threat in the Liptako-Gourma area.

Allow me to stress the importance of adhering to human rights principles and the framework of international humanitarian law when conducting counter-terrorism operations. We commend the G-5 States for the steps taken to raise awareness in and train the Joint Force, as well as for the announcements regarding the investigation of alleged human rights violations, and we stand ready to support that process further.

Finally, to achieve long-term security in the Sahel, we need to address the root causes of the instability. In this regard, it is necessary to make efforts to reduce poverty and the marginalization of certain groups, and to promote gender equality. It is of the utmost importance to keep those aspects in mind when designing strategies and mandates together with the countries of the region.

Annex VII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière

[Original: English and French]

I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritania for their interventions.

I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the countries of the Sahel as well as to the victims' families following the recent violence, especially in Burkina Faso.

I want to share two messages today.

First, France is convinced that the international community can succeed in stabilizing the Sahel if it acts in a united and determined manner. The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), under the resolute command of General Namata Gazama, and the national armies of these countries have recently increased their military operations. Despite heavy losses, they achieved concrete results: the neutralization of many terrorists, seizure of weapons and equipment, and release of hostages. These armed forces gain more and more autonomy and coordination. In addition, the countries of the region, including the Niger, a member of the Security Council, despite limited resources, show resilience and maintain a dynamic democratic life. We must salute their commitment.

Then, and this is my second point, the international community has recently increased its support, which is a key milestone for the success of our collective efforts. At the request of the G-5 Sahel countries, France, together with the European Union, supported the launch of the Coalition for the Sahel this year. It rests on four pillars: the fight against terrorism, capacity-building, return of the State, and economic development because all of these issues must work together. That mobilization will continue in June with the first meeting of ministers for foreign affairs of the Coalition on 12 June, preceded by a meeting of defence ministers.

On the ground, the launch of the Coalition resulted in the establishment of a joint command mechanism between the French Operation Barkhane and the armies of the G-5 Sahel; increased commitment on the part of partners, notably the European Union, but also the African Union, as well as the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union, which are funding a \$2.3 billion counter-terrorism plan; and, finally, the launch of Task Force Takuba, which brings together European special forces to support the Malian armed forces.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali plays an essential role in this game, thanks to the support it provides to the operations of G-5 Sahel forces. We must consolidate this United Nations support for the countries of the Sahel to help them ensure the security of their territories and their populations.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry

On behalf of the three African countries that are members of the Security Council — namely, Niger, South Africa and Tunisia — and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1), I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, very sincerely for his excellent presentation and sustained commitment to stabilizing the situation in the Sahel.

We welcome and thank Mr. Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritania, current Chair of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), for the honour he has bestowed upon us in taking part in the work of the Council today.

The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/373) highlights the security challenges posed by armed terrorist groups within the G-5 Sahel States, which are among the most economically challenged in the world. These have placed a burden on our populations, increasing the number of internally displaced persons to an alarming 1.4 million. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has also rocketed to 14.7 million. We express our grave concern at these trends and underscore the additional resources required to alleviate the conditions of those in need.

In addition to those factors, the effects of climate change, particularly on pastoral activity essential to local economies, and of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic could further aggravate the already precarious situation of the populations of the Sahel.

We deplore the fact that terrorist groups in the Sahel have ignored the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian truce and sought instead to take advantage of the pandemic by continuing their murderous attacks and propaganda.

It is undeniable that since the last report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/868), the security situation in the Sahel has deteriorated. The increasing asymmetrical attacks by armed terrorist groups have indiscriminately affected our defence and security forces and allied forces such as Operation Barkhane, as well, unfortunately, as our civilian populations, primarily women and children.

In the face of this unprecedented violence, the G-5 Sahel countries, devoting between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of their budget to the defence sector, have pursued their dedicated efforts to eradicate terrorism with the unwavering support of their partners. Thanks to those efforts, on 3 March, as indicated in the report, the Joint Force freed six hostages following a particularly complex operation. That clearly demonstrated the military capacity of the Force and the tenacity and dedication of its soldiers.

Additionally, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force has been active in many red zones and carried out successful operations, either on its own or with the support of Operation Barkhane, depending on their nature.

We welcome the fact that the complex situation prevailing in the Lake Chad region has improved significantly thanks to the excellent results of Operation Colère de Bohoma, led by the Chadian army, whose Commander-in-Chief, President Idriss Deby Itno, was on the battlefield himself.

At the same time, the security arrangements of the G-5 Sahel have been strengthened with the recent establishment in Niamey, the Niger, of the joint command mechanism for all forces operating in the Liptako-Gourma triangle and the

extension of the area of intervention of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force from 50 kilometres to 100 kilometres on both sides of the State borders.

The three African members of the Council, together with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, appreciate the efforts of the international community and, in particular, those of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in support of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. The fight against terrorism has thereby been strengthened, in particular with the launch of the Coalition for the Sahel at the Pau summit on 13 January, and the prospect of the start of operations by Task Force Takuba, in which European special forces will be engaged.

In this context, we also recall the communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council, issued at its 920th meeting, which welcomed the collaborative efforts towards realizing the deployment of 3,000 troops to the Sahel for six months.

We likewise welcome the continued determination of the Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union to combat terrorism and achieve peace, security and stability in the Sahel. This showcases the resilience and resolve of regional organizations on issues affecting their member States.

We call on the international community to intensify its support for the fight against terrorism by strengthening the military capabilities of the G-5 Sahel States, assisting with the restoration of State presence and authority in areas under terrorist threat and also by supporting economic and social development efforts in the affected areas.

We wish to reiterate the legitimate request, often expressed by the G-5 Sahel States, that the Joint Force be placed under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. That would undoubtedly bolster the efforts of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as well as regional and continental efforts, and strengthen the impetus for the fight against terrorism in the Sahel.

We are encouraged by the fact that despite the multiple challenges faced by the Joint Force, efforts have been made by the G-5 Sahel States to advance the women and peace and security agenda by agreeing to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to force-generation efforts, which is a clear recognition of the need for the greater participation of women in operations. In that context, we call on the relevant United Nations agencies, in particular UN-Women, and the international community to provide the support necessary to optimize those efforts.

Keeping the issue of the Sahel high on the international agenda is of the utmost importance, even more so as we face this unprecedented COVID-19 crisis.

As was recalled during the fourth extraordinary session of the Conference of Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel, held on 15 December 2019, it is important that a Marshall Plan be put in place to support development actions in the Sahel.

As we approach the renewal of the mandate of MINUSMA, which is closely linked with the operations of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, the A3+1 cherish the hope that this renewal will strengthen the framework of that cooperation in a practical and sustainable manner. It is against that background that the A3+1 is of the view that emphasis should be placed on optimizing the current support mechanism so that it reaches the Joint Force's battalions with fewer constraints while strengthening its capacities and competencies. Complete operational support should be provided to the Joint Force, both tactically and strategically.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm here the firm commitment of the G-5 Sahel States to respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law as well as the commitment to their implementation of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework. The fight against terrorism, whether in the Sahel or elsewhere, should not place a burden on civilian populations or be a source of additional fear for them. On the contrary, it should free them from the grip of criminal terrorists, whose attacks caused more than 4,000 deaths in 2019 alone in the region.

In the pursuit of this asymmetrical war, if, unfortunately, doubts and suspicions of abuses or inappropriate behaviour are noted with regard to the civilian population, everything should be done, with professionalism and determination, to identify the perpetrators of such acts and bring them to justice.

The effectiveness of our response in our common fight against terrorism in the Sahel lies in our ability to develop a robust, coherent and integrated strategy to address the security, humanitarian and development challenges.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: English and Russian]

We thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the representative of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritania, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, for their briefings.

We agree with the alarming assessments of the situation in the Sahel. Security threats in this part of Africa remain high. Against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic and the related quarantine measures, terrorist activity has again intensified, and drug trafficking and organized crime are expanding. Unfortunately, we are receiving almost every week tragic reports of heinous terrorist attacks.

The pandemic has led to serious humanitarian consequences for the region, which was in a difficult situation long before the current crisis. Schools are closed, and more and more people need food and medical care. This state of affairs creates fertile ground for the radicalization of the population. In this regard, the countries of the region must be assisted in effectively opposing the expansion of extremist ideology, begin to address the severe socioeconomic problems, strengthen State institutions and foster a culture of respect for human rights.

We support the efforts of the G-5 Sahel States to deploy the Joint Force to combat terrorism and organized crime. It seems that in a relatively short period of time it has already become an important element of regional security. We are pleased to take note of information on several successful counter-terrorism operations carried out by the Joint Force in the reporting period. Improved planning and coordination between military units expanded the scale and duration of operations. We welcome the establishment of a joint coordination mechanism in Niamey between the G-5 Sahel and other military presences in the region. We hope that the current difficulties associated with the coronavirus will be temporary in nature and that the Joint Force will be able to resume operations in the near future.

We are convinced of the importance of further coordinated steps on the part of both Africa and the international community aimed at combating terrorism in the Sahelo-Saharan region. We support the initiative of the African Union to develop a plan for the deployment of the African Standby Force there. We note the timely decision of the West African Monetary and Economic Union to adopt an action plan to finance the fight against terrorism in the region through 2024.

It is obvious that the full-fledged functioning of the G-5 Sahel forces depends on two important factors: ensuring its stable and predictable financing and providing appropriate transport and logistics assistance. We note that the funds promised by foreign donors are gradually reaching the region. We support the assistance provided to the Joint Force by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), in accordance with the mandate set out in resolution 2480 (2019). We are ready to consider options for improving the assistance provided by MINUSMA, which were included in the recent report of the Secretary-General on Mali (S/2020/476).

Russia is closely monitoring the developments of the situation in the region. We are already providing a number of countries with appropriate military and technical assistance and training of military and police personnel. In general, we believe that in the near future the armed forces of the Sahel region will become an even more effective tool in restoring and maintaining peace in West Africa.

Annex X**Statement by the Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, James Roscoe**

I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Mauritania for their briefings.

I want to begin by paying tribute to the forces of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), to United Nations peacekeepers serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), to the international troops deployed in Operation Barkhane, and to all those working to bring peace and security to the people of the Sahel.

Our thoughts are with the families of those who have paid the ultimate price in the service of this cause, and with the innocent civilians who continue to suffer the impact of the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. Just last weekend three attacks by jihadist armed groups in northern and eastern Burkina Faso led to the loss of more than 50 lives. The United Kingdom strongly condemns all such attacks and calls for all parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians.

Since the Council last discussed the situation in the Sahel (see S/PV.8670), the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has created new challenges to bringing about stability and development in the region. It will increase pressure on limited State resources and risks diverting international attention away from tackling the drivers of instability. In response, the United Kingdom is supporting Governments and our humanitarian implementation partners in the Sahel to manage escalating health and humanitarian needs.

But we recognize that the secondary impacts of COVID-19 will also hit these countries hard, and so we are also helping the Governments of the region to address the longer-term socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. This is in addition to the \$665 million that the United Kingdom is contributing to global efforts to develop vaccines, treatments and testing for COVID-19 and to the International Monetary Fund to support vulnerable economies.

In this highly challenging context, we commend the efforts of the G-5 Sahel nations and their partners to address security concerns and tackle cross-border threats. We welcome the increased operational output and improved capabilities of the Joint Force and the positive trajectory of improving coordination with regional and international forces.

The United Kingdom is proud to be supporting efforts to stabilize the Sahel through our deployment to MINUSMA later this year, through our non-combat assistance to Operation Barkhane and our ongoing contribution to the European Union training mission in Mali. We are also supporting the G-5 Sahel Joint Force itself with United Kingdom bilateral contributions so far totalling \$3.4 million, in addition to our contributions through other organizations. We would welcome all partners who have committed to supporting the Force to deliver their pledges in full.

I would like to reiterate that there can be no sustainable peace and security in the Sahel without the protection and promotion of human rights and compliance with international human humanitarian law. The United Kingdom welcomes the progress made in implementing the human rights compliance framework for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, but we would underscore that all reports of human rights violations and abuses — whether by violent extremist groups, “self-defence” militias or State security forces — need to be addressed. That is essential to prevent not only human suffering but also impunity, strengthen the social contract between citizens and

the State, and avoid creating grievances that fuel further violence. We urge all G-5 Governments to ensure that any allegations of violations committed by their security forces are thoroughly and transparently investigated and that all perpetrators are brought to justice.

The United Kingdom is also concerned by the increasing pressures on humanitarian access in the region. It is critical that all parties respect the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian actors and facilitate unimpeded access to ensure that emergency assistance reaches those in need.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom will continue to play its part, working with the United Nations, the G-5 Sahel States and all our partners across the region in pursuit of peace, stability, sustainable development and justice for the people of the Sahel.

Annex XI**Statement by the Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Cherith Norman Chalet**

I thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing today. The situation in the Sahel remains one of the United States top security concerns in Africa, and the challenges of the coronavirus disease pandemic make it all the more important for the international community to work together.

The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) remains the long-term solution to re-establishing security in the Sahel. The United States is committed to supporting the Joint Force by providing equipment, training and advisory support to fill critical capability gaps on a bilateral basis, and continues to call on other countries to do the same. We commend the steady progress we have seen over the past few months in Joint Force operations.

But Joint Force operations alone will not be enough. Root causes of conflict must be addressed through coordinated humanitarian aid and long-term assistance in health, agriculture, citizen-responsive governance, democracy and human rights.

We urge the signatory parties to the Algiers accord to act on their commitments and swiftly implement the agreement. The provisions of the accord will have a stabilizing effect not just in northern Mali but also in the entire Sahel region. Once the Government of Mali and those of its partner countries take real, substantive action on the accord, they can focus more resources and attention on terrorist threats that are spreading in the region.

The sustainability of our collective efforts to stabilize the region will depend on the progress of the Governments, civil society and the private sector in G-5 Sahel States to create effective, citizen-responsive governance, increase access to opportunity for all citizens and respect and embrace human rights, accountability, and inclusiveness. Also critical will be increasing the meaningful participation of women, youth and marginalized groups in decision-making. Together, these endeavours can achieve durable peace and stability and unleash the potential of this vital region and its people.

Annex XII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, representative of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mauritania, for their insightful briefings.

Viet Nam is very concerned about the security situation in the Sahel region. There has been an increase in the number of terrorist attacks on civilians, peacekeepers and security forces in the Sahel countries. Viet Nam would like to extend its deepest condolences to the Governments and the families of those who lost their lives due to recent attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger and Chad. The perpetrators of those barbaric acts must be brought to justice.

Viet Nam is also concerned about the withdrawal of State presence in the areas concerned and the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the region. In Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali, the Niger and Senegal, 14.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. In addition, the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has been putting the Sahel region at risk of further instability and insecurity.

Viet Nam welcomes the initiatives on capacity-building for the region, which include workshops on the role of women, national surveys on gender and human rights capacity-building for security-sector actors of the G-5 Sahel countries in Mali, and a regional workshop on human rights monitoring and the protection of sources, victims and witnesses in the Niger.

Viet Nam welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in response to requests by the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. We call on the international community to support MINUSMA and other organizations in accomplishing their tasks and mandates in support of the operations of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

Against that backdrop, my delegation wishes to make the following observations.

First, we urge all concerned parties to continue the fight against terrorism and violent extremism across West Africa and the Sahel. Without collective efforts, strong will and collaboration, the region cannot win this fight.

Secondly, we also call on the Governments in the Sahel, regional and international organizations and other partners to strengthen their cooperation to tackle the root causes of terrorism. We join the Secretary-General in welcoming the adoption of the action plan to eradicate terrorism for the period 2020-2024 by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States, on 21 December 2019. We also welcome the outcomes of the sixth annual summit of the G-5 Sahel Heads of State, held on 25 February 2020; the Pau summit, in January; and the high-level video-teleconference between the European Union and the G-5 Sahel Heads of State, held on 28 April 2019.

Thirdly, we urge Governments and other concerned parties to uphold their obligations and responsibilities to implement international humanitarian law and ensure that humanitarian aid reaches those who most need it, without hindrance. Moreover, it is urgent to have a comprehensive plan and coordination among Governments in the Sahel, international organizations and other partners in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fourthly, we call for a coherent and integrated approach to security, humanitarian, climate-change and development challenges in the region. It is necessary for the various forces to enhance coordination, the exchange of information, transparency and mutual support through the establishment of the Coalition for the Sahel. There should also be more workshops, seminars on capacity-building and training courses for women and youth on sustainable development in the region.

In conclusion, we commend the tireless efforts of MINUSMA, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the Coalition for the Sahel's joint command mechanism.

We call for closer cooperation among and further efforts on the part of the United Nations, international partners and all parties in West Africa and the Sahel to fight terrorism and violent extremism, ensure unimpeded access to humanitarian aid and join hands to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.
