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Seventieth year

7566th meeting

Wednesday, 25 November 2015, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Wilson	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (S/2015/866)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (S/2015/866)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

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/2015/866, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Ms. Sellassie.

Ms. Sellassie: It is my honour to brief the Security Council for the second time on the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the situation in the Sahel. This is an important opportunity to highlight the predicament of a region that desperately needs the continued focus of the Security Council. I take the floor at a time when terrorist attacks have taken place around the world — in Bamako, northern Cameroon, Nigeria, Paris and Lebanon, and the targeting of a Russian aircraft over the Sinai — attacks in which too many innocent lives were lost and which I strongly condemn. The attacks attest to the global reach of terrorism and the interconnectedness of all communities, rich or poor, and are a reminder to all of us that no one is immune to this threat.

The fight against terrorism requires international solidarity. Global partnerships in the fight against terrorism are no longer an option; they are an imperative for survival.

Security threats continue to be the main preoccupation in the Sahel region. Increasingly, the countries of the region, which are among the poorest and least developed in the world, are forced to dedicate significant percentages of their budgets to address

security threats, in a region where only 56 per cent of children have access to primary education and only 36 per cent of the population can read or write. This unsustainable vicious cycle can only worsen without strong international assistance.

It is very alarming that young people and women in the Sahel, who constitute a vast majority of the population, are the targets of recruitment into radical movements. Up to 41 million young people under 25 years of age in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger alone face hopelessness and are at risk of radicalization or migration. If nothing is done to improve access to education and increase employment, integration and opportunities for young people, the Sahel, I am afraid, will become a hub of mass migration and recruitment and training of terrorist groups and individuals, which, as Council members know, will ultimately have grave consequences for global peace and security.

Drug traffickers are increasingly colluding with armed groups and terrorism movements that grant them safe passage in exchange for financial benefits. If conflicts are to be prevented in the Sahel, illicit trafficking, including in drugs, weapons and human beings, should be stopped.

Governance challenges are persistent, with major segments of populations continuing to be denied meaningful political participation. Building communities' resilience continues to be a real challenge in the Sahel due to the persistence of extreme environmental degradation, repeated climate shocks and demographic trends that, together, are pushing millions of people to the brink of humanitarian disaster.

The persistence of those challenges notwithstanding, there are reasons to be optimistic about the Sahel. First of all, the Sahel has continued to receive the sustained attention of the international community, as evidenced by the numerous Sahel strategies. Improvements in the coordination of our efforts and strategies will enhance the benefits of those activities for Sahel communities.

Secondly, the countries of the region have taken greater leadership in, and ownership of, initiatives designed to address regional challenges in the Sahel. There is evidence of enhanced partnership and coordination between the countries of the region and international partners using various platforms established by the Group of Five for the Sahel, the

African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

Thirdly, the United Nations entities working in the region have greatly improved coordination and coherence in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. My office has made ownership of projects by the countries of the region the hallmark of its regional programming by ensuring full consultations and effective operational partnerships with regional organizations, Governments, civil society and beneficiary communities.

We have worked closely and in an innovative manner with several United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that are now jointly developing and implementing projects aimed at addressing multidimensional issues in the areas of governance, security and resilience. In that regard, significant progress has been made in the development of regional projects by United Nations entities and the International Organization for Migration, in collaboration with regional organizations and countries of the region.

I recognize the central responsibility of the Sahel countries to take the lead in finding solutions to the challenges they face. However, I am also obliged to admit that the Sahel is a victim of the effects of such global phenomena as climate change, drug trafficking, violent extremism and the global economic decline, which surpass the nations' capacity to address them and that require diverse tools to mitigate and prevent these trends.

As I conclude, I would like to make two recommendations. First, I would urge the Security Council to remain engaged in support of the Sahel region. Secondly, I would urge the Security Council to fully use existing mechanisms and expand their mandate to better monitor, report on and prevent the trafficking of drugs in the Sahel region. This trade finances terror and instability, and must be choked if our efforts are to be successful. I would also like to highlight the importance of listing all those who indirectly finance or support terrorist activities in the Sahel. In that regard, I commend the efforts of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, which has so far listed seven entities and six individuals who have their origins in the Sahel region.

Finally, I encourage the international community to enhance its support to the United Nations and regional organizations in addressing cross-cutting and transboundary issues. Together, and only together, we can prevent further deterioration of the situation in the Sahel.

The President: I thank Ms. Guebre Sellassie for her briefing, and also in particular for the two recommendations that she made to us, which I hope we shall be able to consider seriously. I hope that she will not mind, considering that she has been so focused in her remarks, if we come back to her with any questions that members of the Council may want to raise.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Gombo (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the United Kingdom presidency for having convened this meeting under the agenda item on the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. I also thank Ms. Guebre Sellassie, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, for her briefing.

Unfortunately, the Sahel region continues to face a security situation characterized by the ongoing crisis in Libya and many enduring threats, including terrorism, in the Lake Chad Basin. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (S/2015/866), security threats in the region — terrorism and violent extremism in particular — require the countries of the region to prioritize security, undermining efforts in equally essential areas.

The major source of the terrorist threat in the Sahel is Libya, which is engulfed in total chaos and where a multitude of heavily armed terrorist groups find safe haven and flourish. Moreover, the absence of a Government of national unity that is capable of restoring security in the country is fuelling the threat to security in the Sahel. In that regard, Chad is deeply concerned by the establishment and entrenchment of a Daesh stronghold in southern Libya. In facing this threat, we stress the urgent need to do everything possible to thwart the expansionism of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and to assist Libyans in creating a Government of national unity.

In the Lake Chad Basin, the terrorist group Boko Haram has been severely weakened, although it continues to carry out deadly asymmetrical attacks

on innocent civilians. The group is no longer able to launch headlong attacks against military positions or to conquer cities, as it did some months ago. Despite its modest means and an especially difficult economic situation, Chad has contributed significantly to the fight against barbarism and obscurantism. On the various fronts of the fight against Boko Haram in neighbouring countries, Chad has lost dozens of brave soldiers and made significant financial sacrifices in its own budget. We reiterate our appeal to the international community and our bilateral and multilateral partners to support the efforts of the countries of the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, and call on the African Union to accelerate the establishment of a trust fund to finance the operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

Aware of the magnitude of the terrorist threat, at their November summit in N'Djamena, the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) decided to pool their efforts in the areas of security and development. In that regard, we note, among other measures, the creation of a joint regional military force and a regional military academy, the launch of a regional aviation company, the construction of a railway line connecting the five countries of the region, and the abolition of visa requirements among them. These new initiatives strengthen those already undertaken in the framework of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel, ably chaired by Mali. As I thank that country for its important efforts, Chad, in its twofold capacity as entering President of the G-5 Sahel and the Ministerial Coordination Platform, will continue to emphasize the need to strengthen multifaceted cooperation in the areas of security and development in the Sahel in general and among the members of the G-5 Sahel in particular.

Along these lines, and given the close correlation between security and development, Chad stresses the urgent need to mobilize significant international resources to finance specific projects for young people and women. Promoting self-employment for those two social sectors would reduce threats to peace, security and development, including violent extremism, armed conflict, trafficking of all kinds, and migration. We encourage the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to pursue her efforts to raise awareness and galvanize development partners with a view to the effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

To that end, we underscore the need for the G-5 Sahel countries to participate fully in the definition,

implementation, follow-up and assessment of priority development projects. We also stress the need to bolster the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and to consider very carefully the transfer of the Office to the headquarters of the permanent secretariat of the G-5 Sahel. The countries of the region have made this request repeatedly, and it should be considered during the December strategic review of the Office. In the same vein, given the hope raised by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the Security Council must meet at least three times a year to discuss the many challenges in the Sahel and the implementation of the Strategy.

In conclusion, we recall the utmost importance of launching a United Nations multi-donor trust fund for the Sahel so as to meet the immense expectations of the countries of the region, pursuant to the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his report.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel for her briefing and for her dedicated work on the ground.

As the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/866) indicates, the Sahel region continues to face grave security, development and socioeconomic challenges. Close coordination of the activities by the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and other regional and subregional actors, ensuring complementarity of effort and enhancing the delivery of assistance and support are crucial. The European Union remains a dedicated partner in those efforts and is implementing its respective strategy and an action plan adopted earlier this year. As part of the European Union Training Mission in Mali, Lithuania has and deployed instructors to train Malian forces Koulikoro, and we will continue to do so.

The 20 November assault on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako was the latest in a series of deadly attacks. We strongly condemn that murderous attack and express our condolences to all those affected.

The terrorist threat posed by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram and groups such as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, Ansar Eddine, Al-Mourabitoun, as well as human smuggling, trafficking, the free flow of arms into the region, further compounded by the Libya crisis, continue to aggravate Sahel's vulnerabilities.

We commend the implementation of projects and flagship programmes by the United Nations family aimed, inter alia, at strengthening security cooperation, border protection, counter-terrorism coordination and information-sharing and countering violent extremism and radicalization in the Sahel. It was encouraging to hear from the Special Envoy that there is more progress in terms of better coordination of the work.

We also welcome the efforts of the G-5 Sahel to reinforce regional security cooperation capacity by carrying out joint cross-border military exercises, as well its members willingness to work together on cross-border issues such as organized crime, radicalization and the root causes of illegal migration.

Tackling poverty and social exclusion and lingering grievances of individual communities within the Sahel countries remains crucial. As the Special Envoy underlined, despite the fact that a huge percentage of the population is below the age of 25, youth are not systematically involved in decision-making and lack education and employment opportunities. Such a situation is a ticking time bomb because, as she also noted, disaffected young people are easy prey for terrorist recruiters and organized crime. The countries of the region need to develop sustainable livelihoods, with the support of international partners, strengthen the presence of the State throughout the respective countries, ensure the delivery of basic social services and guarantee access to justice.

In all of the countries of the region, there is a clear need to develop rule-of-law, law enforcement and judicial capacities to be able to detain and try terrorists and radical extremists. Tangible improvements are also urgent in the detention and penitentiary systems, considering the fact that prisons can often serve as recruitment grounds for violent extremists and criminals, especially in conditions where regular criminals and petty offenders are held together with terrorist suspects for lengthy periods. Concerns with regard to the safety and security of judges who try terrorist cases must also be taken into account and addressed.

In our view, more attention is required on preventing recruitment and radicalization among vulnerable refugee and displaced persons communities, especially in border zones, where terrorist extremists can come and go as they please owing to porous borders. Such zones are in general subject to particular vulnerabilities, and it is therefore no wonder that when Boko Haram first

struck the Niger it did so in the border zone of Rosso-Diffa.

The role of women, civil society representatives and religious leaders remains essential to counter radicalization. Some good practices exist among the countries of the region — for example, on promoting moderate Islam, the training of Imams in Mali — that could be shared and applied more broadly.

In conclusion, I would like to ask the Special Envoy a couple of questions with regard to counter-terrorism efforts. How would she assess progress in developing national counter-terrorism/counter-violent extremism strategies in the countries of the Sahel? How could the Security Council aid those countries in that regard? Earlier this year, there were recommendations to strengthen her Office's capacity on countering terrorism and violent extremism. Has anything been done since? How can we help her to strengthen the ability of her Office to deliver on the ground?

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, as well as her efforts to step up the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

The Sahel continues to face vulnerabilities in the area of comprehensive security. The growing activity of terrorist groups has affected the efforts to achieve sustainable peace and speed up the implementation of the Integrated Strategy, thereby jeopardizing security and the safety of the inhabitants of the region. The heightened violence by those groups makes it urgent that we undertake national, regional and international efforts to combat this scourge in a coordinated way so as to prevent the proliferation of such organizations and the escalation of violent extremism.

Regional and international coordination are also urgent, given the porous borders and the vast territories, which the countries of the region are barely able to control. We therefore appreciate the efforts of the States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and of Benin in establishing and implementing a joint multinational force to confront terrorist groups. We encourage the countries of the region to follow that example, all the while ensuring that the operations of those forces are governed by international law and human rights.

The deterioration in the security situation hampers the implementation of the Humanitarian Strategic

Response Plan for the Sahel and efforts aimed at saving lives and improving the resilience and ability of Governments to manage the work of development actors. The prevailing insecurity has served to create a transit corridor from sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa and Europe for people seeking protection and who are exposed to trafficking. We are greatly concerned about the situation facing displaced persons who board boats bound for Europe with a legitimate hope of finding a better world.

The complex emergency affecting the Sahel is one of the most protracted humanitarian crises of recent times, and is aggravated by food insecurity, malnutrition, epidemics and natural disasters. We reiterate the importance for the international community to contribute to the financing of the relevant humanitarian appeals. It is also imperative to further strengthen the coherence of United Nations efforts in the Sahel to create conditions conducive to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

It is essential for States to continue to promote gender mainstreaming and integrate women into all sectors of public life. We note the efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and the adoption in countries of the region of laws on gender parity in public institutions — an initiative we hope others will emulate.

The young people of the Sahel have few prospects of a better future. It is urgent to promote investments in the education, health and employment sectors and to create opportunities for young people, thereby preventing migration, radicalization and the recruitment of young by terrorist groups.

We reiterate our support for the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which is a model of preventive action to prioritize projects to address the structural causes of instability. The Strategy will allow the Sahel region face the threat together and holistically and to set up mechanisms for interaction and joint cooperation among regional and local authorities.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting on peace and security in the Sahel. We also thank Ms. Guebre Sellassie, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, for her briefing and for the efforts she directs to marshal the needed support for the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

The Sahel faces many challenges in the security, political and humanitarian fields. That has led to a deterioration in the humanitarian situation and created fertile ground for armed terrorist groups. In turn, that poses a threat to peace and security in the region. It is not an overstatement to say that the Sahel is a crossroads for terrorist groups, including armed terrorist groups coming from the Middle East. The effects of their actions are clearly visible throughout the world. Jordan emphatically condemns the terrorist attacks, especially the recent attack that targeted a hotel in the centre of Bamako. We reiterate our rejection of terrorism, which is directed at civilians in many parts of the world.

On the security front, the increase in terrorist groups' activities and their move into the Sahel region, and the expanding illicit trade in drugs and arms, the result of weak security institutions and the inability of some States in the region to protect their extensive borders have all led to a deteriorating security situation and undermined the security of citizens in the region and of society as a whole.

Concerning the strengthening of regional security cooperation among the countries of the Sahel with the aim of eradicating terrorism and enhancing Africa's peace and security architecture, Jordan welcomes the steps they have taken to eliminate Boko Haram, including the Nouakchott Process and the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force, as well as the creation of the Group of Five for the Sahel. In that regard, Jordan is of the view that the international community should support the Sahel in creating a unified, comprehensive regional strategy. It should be aimed both at eradicating terrorism and at tackling the problem of terrorist groups by depriving them of their ability to recruit citizens by cutting off their financing sources and by dealing with the region's economic and social challenges so that the groups can no longer exploit them in order to recruit new fighters. The countries of the Sahel region should also step up their efforts to counter transnational security threats by strengthening their border controls and ending illicit trafficking in arms, natural resources and narcotics.

In the areas of political stability, peaceful transition and the holding of elections, the fact that entire sectors of society, including young people, women and minorities, do not participate enough in political life, coupled with weaknesses in institutions, governance and the rule of law, makes for a source of tension and

instability and undermines regional efforts to improve stability and cohesion.

On the humanitarian front, the indicators have regressed as a result of increasing acts of violence. More than 20 million people suffer from food insecurity, and about 4.4 million have been displaced, which is extremely worrying. The international community must act to end this slide. Unemployment remains high, particularly among young people, who are becoming economically marginalized at a time when the region urgently needs to invest in its young people's strengths. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and unstable family relationships contribute to creating a fertile environment for extremist and obscurantist ideology, and we are grateful to Ms. Sellassie for drawing our attention to this important issue.

In conclusion, Jordan reaffirms the importance of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which must be promoted if we are to mobilize partnerships and strengthen regional cooperation, particularly on the security front, in order to tackle the current emerging and interlinked challenges, while at the same time formulating a comprehensive vision aimed at dealing with the underlying causes of tension and conflict so as to strengthen peace and establish lasting security in the region.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): We would like to thank Special Envoy Sellassie for her briefing today. We see considerable merit in increasing the frequency and tempo of the Council's engagement with the Special Envoy.

The Sahel is facing multifaceted challenges — drug trafficking, human trafficking, irregular migration, environmental degradation and the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. All of these remain matters of great concern.

Armed groups, terrorists and criminal gangs continue to pose a potent threat to peace and stability in the region. As their activities are clearly transboundary, addressing them will require the close cooperation and collaboration of the countries in the region. It is in recognition of that fact that members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission — Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Nigeria, along with Benin — are actively collaborating within the framework of the Multinational Joint Task Force in order to combat and defeat Boko Haram. The effectiveness of our joint action is evident in the steady progress the Task Force had made in the war

against Boko Haram. Territory has been reclaimed and socioeconomic activities, including education, have resumed in the liberated areas. To sustain those gains, the Nigerian Government has begun to implement rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes in the areas of the country affected by Boko Haram.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is another principal cause of insecurity in the Sahel. Combating the problem is therefore crucial to improving the security situation in the region. That will of course require concerted action on the part of the international community, regional organizations, States and other stakeholders, including arms producers and exporters. States in the region must intensify their efforts to achieve the African Union's goal of silencing the guns. We believe that full compliance with the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other Related Materials of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) would aid that concerted effort.

We would like to commend the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel for its support to the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel and other regional mechanisms. We note the outcome of the Platform's third meeting, held in November 2014, concerning the establishment of thematic groups for addressing issues of governance, security, resilience and development. We expect that to facilitate implementation of the Sahel initiatives and strategies. We strongly support efforts to strengthen regional ownership of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. The Strategy's prioritization of flagship projects is indeed a positive development. We are convinced that emphasizing such projects will help to mitigate the overlapping security risks in the Sahel.

Nigeria believes that resolving the multifaceted problems in the Sahel requires a holistic solution, and that the path to a holistic solution lies in a comprehensive and coordinated approach. While we welcome the initiatives of the United Nations, we acknowledge the significant efforts of other stakeholders to address the challenges of the Sahel. They include the African Union Strategy for the Sahel, the ECOWAS Sahel Strategy and the Maghreb Arab Union's subregional programme to combat desertification in the Maghreb. Others include the European Union Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and the commitments of multilateral actors such as the Group of Five for the Sahel. We believe that those initiatives can gain

from close coordination, based on the capabilities and comparative advantages of the various stakeholders.

As the Secretary-General is embarking on the strategic review of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel by the end of this year, we look forward to recommendations that can not only deepen the partnership of the United Nations with key regional stakeholders but also strengthen regional ownership of the process of implementing the Strategy. We want to take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the Special Envoy, Ms. Sellassie, for her astute leadership, and we assure her of our continued and unalloyed support.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today's meeting, and Ms. Sellassie for her briefing.

The situation in the Sahel region is a source of concern and requires greater input and integrated approaches by the international community. China wishes to highlight the following four points.

First, the international community should start by tackling hot-spot issues in the Sahel region by actively supporting the efforts of the countries of the region to undertake political processes aimed at achieving steady progress towards peace, stability and development in the region. It is necessary to actively support the relevant parties in Mali in their efforts to comprehensively implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation signed last June and to promote steady progress in the peace process in Mali. Close attention must be paid to the spillover effect of the crisis in Libya and other hot-spot issues outside the region by promoting the resolution of relevant issues and reducing the impact of complex external factors on the region.

Secondly, the relevant counter-terrorism bodies within the United Nations system should provide greater input with respect to the Sahel region and promote the counter-terrorism efforts of the countries of the region. The international community should actively support the countries of the region in their efforts to speed up capacity-building in the area of security and support the counter-terrorism efforts of the countries of the region. Such efforts must adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other fundamental norms governing international relations. There should be no double standards, nor should they link terrorism to any specific religion or ethnicity.

Thirdly, we hope that countries in the Sahel region will take the opportunity of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to formulate a development agenda and strategy tailored to their national conditions. The international community and international financial institutions should provide greater assistance for development and actively help the countries in the region to improve their indigenous capacity for development. The relevant agencies of the United Nations should carry out in-depth studies of the actual needs of the countries in the region, formulate a clear and achievable list of projects as well as measures and a timetable for implementation, and promote tailored input from international donors in the provision of assistance and cooperation, so as to speed up socioeconomic development in the region.

Fourthly, the United Nations should further strengthen its communication and coordination with the five countries in the region, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other countries and organizations in Africa, with a view to linking the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel with national and regional strategies so as to leverage their respective advantages, strengthen resource consolidation and create synergy in their joint efforts to resolve the issues facing the Sahel.

In 2013, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Presidents of the World Bank and the African Development Bank made joint visits to the Sahel region and achieved positive results, thus initiating a new model of joint efforts by the international community aimed at resolving regional issues. The relevant parties should consider visiting the region again so as to assess the status of implementation of the outcomes reached during recent visits and make new commitments for assistance.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to relations between China and Africa, as reflected in its provision of bilateral assistance and its participation in peacekeeping operations. China has been making unremitting efforts to promote peace, stability and development in Africa. Next month, the second summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, under the theme "Africa-China Progressing Together: Win-Win Cooperation for Common Development", will be held for the first time in Africa. Leaders from China and African countries will gather in Johannesburg to draw up a joint plan for the development of China-Africa relations and cooperation over the coming three years.

China will take advantage of this opportunity to make greater efforts to strengthen its cooperation with African countries in the five priority areas of industrialization, agricultural modernization, public health, people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security, with a view to bringing about tangible benefits to African countries, including the countries of the region, as well as to carry out win-win cooperation for common development.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish at the outset to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and Head of Office for the Sahel for her briefing.

As reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/866), the security situation in the Sahel region remains unstable, giving rise to concern at the direct effects thereon of the complex political realities prevailing in Libya and Mali, the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, as well as increased drugs and arms trafficking. Venezuela has repeatedly warned of this in the Council, and we have expressed our concern at the armed violence, the spread of terrorism and the destruction of the capacities of the Libyan State following the 2011 military intervention, which gave rise to instability in the subregion and other parts of the world.

Concerning Mali, as we have stated before, Venezuela welcomes the efforts made in the area of dialogue and negotiation among the parties to the conflict in Mali, as well as the mediation team led by Algeria, as reflected in the signing last June of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, which has led to considerable progress, not just for the country itself but in terms of the stability of the region.

At the same time, we continue to condemn the spread of terrorism, which has given rise to a structurally serious situation in the northern and central parts of the country, where the prevailing violence was reflected in the terrorist attacks that took place in Bamako last week, which were strongly condemned by the Council. The political and security instability in Libya and Mali, as well as trafficking in small arms and light weapons in the subregion, has created a dangerous hotbed of tension in the Sahel as a whole, resulting in an exacerbated climate of violence, which has promoted criminal activity and trafficking in drugs and weapons, as well as terrorism, with the civilian population being the primary victims.

We are concerned at the fact that terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Qaida, among others, have intensified their operations in the Sahel region, with the inevitable consequences being an increased number of displaced persons and refugees. We therefore hope that the sustained efforts being carried out in the field by the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat Boko Haram will lead to its achieving its goal in the fight against terrorism.

Unfortunately, the effects of these conflicts and threats to security have forced the States in the region to give priority to financing the security sector over and above critical socioeconomic needs such as those arising from the humanitarian situation. The report of the Secretary-General describes a set of factors reflecting the humanitarian needs of more than 20 million people in the region, including conflict-related violence, food insecurity, epidemics and natural disasters.

While we recognize the advances made by the United Nations 2014-2016 Humanitarian Strategic Response Plan for the Sahel in responding to acute and chronic needs in the region, including capacity-building for Governments, we are concerned that humanitarian programmes in the Sahel continue to be underfunded. We therefore call on the international community to continue to commit itself to mobilizing resources in order to alleviate the urgent humanitarian needs in the Sahel. The role played by Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Niger and Mali as members of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel, the Nouakchott process and the informal group of international partners for the Sahel has been very important in implementing social and security policies in the region.

We stress the fact that these efforts should be focused on sustainable development in the region and not purely a military vision. Failure to address the structural causes of conflicts leads to more violence. It is only with sustained attention to the root causes of conflict — such as poverty, lack of access to basic services and education, political dialogue and adequate support by regional and international partners — can we ensure strong and sustainable peace and security. Because of its geographic and political characteristics, the Sahel has the ability to contribute to constructive solutions that effectively meet the major challenges in terms of internal displacement, refugees and migratory flows, which in recent times have had a significant human impact on the Mediterranean region.

While we must go after mafia groups that traffick in human beings and take advantage of misfortune of the disadvantaged, we must also act with political and moral coherence in putting in place policies for the region that do not encourage armed conflicts by way of economic interests. In that way, we could avoid the tragic consequences and eventual regret over the interregional impact of such crises as the current one involving migrants.

We acknowledge the importance of the good results achieved by the joint efforts of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, as reflected in the Secretary-General's report, especially the work aimed at women and young people as those especially vulnerable to the effects of violence, the purpose of which is to prevent armed conflicts and the spread of violent extremism, but above all to relieve the suffering of millions of people who are excluded from the right to development.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the wealth and many natural resources of Africa have historically been a target of the ambition on the part of more powerful nations and their dire colonial legacy, which has led to untold suffering, conflicts and divisions in the region. Mobilizing resources and financing for development initiatives and projects in the Sahel must be based on the spirit of sustainability and cooperation, whereby leadership in overall management as well as over specific projects is exercised by Governments and peoples jointly with the specialized agencies of the United Nations and the African Union, which should lead the international effort.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I would like to express the condolences of the Government of New Zealand to the Malian people and those affected by the attack in Bamako on Friday. Such attacks seem endless, and we are horrified anew every time.

In the light of Friday's attack, it is all the more important that the parties to the Mali peace process continue to consolidate the hard-won gains made this year to move forward with the implementation of the agreement on peace and reconciliation in Mali. Similarly, it is vital that the peace process in Libya does not falter and is brought to a successful conclusion.

I would like to thank the Special Envoy for the Sahel, Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, for her briefing and for her work across the Sahel. The challenges detailed in the Special Envoy's briefing and the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/866) are immense.

Making progress will require sustained long-term focus by the Governments of the region and support from the international community. New Zealand hopes that we will be able to adopt a draft presidential statement as a clear acknowledgement of the challenges to peace, security and stability across the Sahel.

We have learned time and time again that the security threats that face one country or region are not contained borders, deserts or, indeed, oceans. That is precisely why the Council has had to become involved in situations that, while largely within the territory of one country, pose a threat to the peace and security of the wider region and, as in the case with the Sahel, well beyond the region.

It is too often that the issues before the Council are considered and acted upon in isolation. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel acknowledges that the threats to international peace and stability within that vast region are interlinked. Terrorism, political instability and the flow of arms, to name but a few, cannot be dealt with without reference to each other and without the region acting in close coordination with the international community. As we know only too well, those threats are not contained within any one of the Sahelian countries, or even within the whole of the Sahel region. The risks of migration, radicalization and terrorism were rightly highlighted by the Special Envoy in her briefing.

Looking ahead, and picking up on the observations and conclusions in the Secretary-General's report, we consider that four steps are critical.

First, ongoing military cooperation in the region is essential. Cooperation among States of the region, such as through the establishment of the multinational joint task force by the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, will be critical to reduce the ability of terrorist groups to operate freely across borders.

Secondly, we need to maintain a concerted focus on humanitarian support. Combating trends such as food insecurity and malnutrition are critical to resolving the root causes of conflict and instability. Social and demographic issues, including gender inequality, entrenched poverty, unemployment, lack of access to education and a growing contingent of disenfranchised youth, also undermine political stability and national cohesion across the Sahel. Ultimately, addressing those challenges requires a long-term approach. The actions, missions and strategies that the Council mandates in the

Sahel must be carefully considered within the context of international support.

Thirdly, we need to acknowledge the impact of the continued instability in Libya on the wider security of the Sahel. The illicit flow of arms, drugs and people across the region undermines national Governments and exposes the countries of the Sahel to unpredictable to unpredictable security vulnerabilities. A resolution of the conflict in Libya is important not only for the people of Libya but for the wider region. New Zealand recognizes the increasingly important role that regional organizations play in addressing regional issues. In that regard, we encourage the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union to harmonize efforts to support the Sahel region.

Fourthly, we encourage the Special Envoy to continue her outreach to all international and regional actors focused on the Sahel. The fact that there are currently a multitude of strategies being pursued by various actors risks duplicating resources and undermining efforts to support the region. We welcome, therefore, the increasing cooperation between the Office for the Special Envoy for the Sahel and the United Nations Office for West Africa. We urge continued and long-term engagement with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and leaders of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Further cooperation will significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the combined efforts in the Sahel.

Our pursuit of international peace and stability in the Sahel must be conducted in unison. If we work together, then the security gains made so far will be harnessed and will better prepare us for future challenges.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Sahel is a priority region for Spain. This morning on my way to the office, I was reviewing the statements of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, and today he said once again that the Sahel is a priority region for Spain. Why is that? It is because we share four types of threats.

First, there is terrorism. The attacks on the Radisson Blu Hotel have demonstrated that terrorism is a main threat to peace and security. For that reason, Spain actively cooperates actively in Mali in the training of the Mali security forces as part of the European Union Training Mission.

Secondly, there is the migration factor. The Sahel has a determining role to play. Suffice to recall that 90 per cent of the migrants from the sub-Saharan region cross the Niger to reach the Mediterranean. Spain's position is very clear in that regard. There is a clear shared responsibility among countries of origin, transit and destination, and I believe it was clearly shown at the Valletta Conference on Migration that Africa and Europe should face the challenge together.

Thirdly, there is the security-development factor. Without security there can be no development, and without development there can be no security. That is why Spain is investing decidedly in the Sahel.

Lastly, climate change is a factor. We held an Arria Formula meeting on 30 October during which we highlighted the fact that climate change is a clear multiplier of risk. In 2013, we launched the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. It raised great expectations, but not all of them have been met. Two years later, there are two central issues that I believe are still fully valid.

The first is the consistency of the strategy, which the representative of France mentioned in the first debate. The Strategy is, first and foremost, a real exercise of consistently bringing together the efforts of United Nations agencies.

The second overarching idea is that of action. We must prioritize taking action over diagnosing problems. The Sahel does not need further studies, surveys or analyses. We all agree on the diagnosis, and the challenges are clearly identified. What the Sahel is calling for is for us to take action now and that we act bearing in mind the region's priorities, and in particular those set by the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

In that connection, I would like to congratulate, first, the Special Envoy for her briefing and the enormous task she is undertaking and to tell her that she has all our support. Secondly, I would like to congratulate Chad for its dual presidency of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel and the Group of Five Sahel, which we believe will align the efforts of the United Nations in the region.

I would like to conclude by saying that, as my Deputy Foreign Minister said at the G-5 Sahel summit in N'Djamena last Friday, Spain's commitment to the

Sahel is not temporary. It is ongoing with a view to the future.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Ms. Sellassie, for her briefing. The United States welcomes her close engagement with regional leaders and the broader international community to assist the countries and the people of the Sahel region on their path towards achieving effective governance, security, development and prosperity.

The horrific attacks last week in Bamako, which killed nearly 20 innocent civilians, including those assisting Mali in its efforts to provide basic services to its population, and yesterday's attack on a convoy of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali that was travelling near Timbuktu, as well as the ongoing threat posed by Boko Haram, especially in north-eastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon remind us just how high the stakes are for the countries of the Sahel.

The creation of the Multinational Joint Task Force, with the participation of Nigeria, the Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Benin, is the most recent example of the deepening commitment by African countries to counter terrorism. African forces, with support from the United Nations and bilateral partners, also responded to the crisis in northern Mali in 2013 by working with the French to dislodge Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and other groups that had established a safe haven there. Our work in Mali is far from finished, and the problems faced by Mali cannot be solved by military force alone. The success of the Mali peace process rests on the Malian parties committing to making hard choices for the collective security of all Malians. We welcome the steps taken by the parties in Mali to uphold the ceasefire arrangements; however, we need to see more progress by the Government on institutional reforms that will better enfranchise northern Malians and improve governance for all citizens, as well as more progress by all the Malian parties to prepare for cantonment and joint security patrols to pave the way for a return of reformed security forces to the north. Progress in these areas will enable Mali to, as President Obama said recently, rid its country of terrorists and strengthen its democracy — goals to which the Security Council is deeply committed. I would like to highlight a few areas in the region where I think we can do more.

First, we believe that enhanced focus on good governance by the countries of the region is essential.

Appropriately, that is one of the pillars of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Inclusive and effective governance and improvements will serve as the foundation for stability across the region. The people of Mali and of other countries of the region have expressed a clear desire for more responsive Government institutions and for peaceful democratic changes of power through inclusive, transparent and free elections.

The recent events in Burkina Faso serve to further demonstrate that legitimate, civilian-led Government is the lifeblood of any democracy and crucial to stability. When a faction of the military attempted in September to seize power from Burkina Faso's transitional President, the population responded with a resounding "No!" Courageous civil society activities helped Burkina Faso to overcome its governance crisis. The people of Burkina Faso are expected to go to the polls for elections on Sunday. We look to the Niger, which is set to hold elections in early 2016 amid serious security challenges at its borders, to continue to make progress towards democratic consolidation and political inclusion.

Secondly, we must work collectively to counter the underlying drivers of violent extremism in the Sahel. The United States welcomes the region's efforts to create a new countering-violent-extremism youth network for the region, which we hope will enable the sharing of best practices. We welcome the fact that the leaders in the Sahel are working to deepen cooperation among themselves, including through the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Nouakchott Process, by coming to agreement on a shared vision of the region's transnational threats and the efforts needed to address them.

The United States will continue to work with its partners in the Sahel and the Maghreb region to build their counter-terrorism capacity, so that they can address the underlying drivers of radicalization and build the long-term law enforcement architecture that will preserve the many gains they have already made. In this vein, we encourage the leaders of the Sahel region to adopt a whole-of-Government approach to countering violent extremism that reflects a common understanding that terrorists will not be defeated by the force of arms alone.

Thirdly and finally, we encourage further progress by the United Nations system and its partners towards the effective implementation of the United Nations

Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We welcome the Secretary-General's forthcoming strategic review of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and the consideration of its recommendations on ways to improve the United Nations system's capacity to deliver assistance effectively to the Sahel region. We encourage Special Envoy Sellassie to continue to pursue her good offices with the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West and Central Africa, as they all work to enhance regional cooperation and strengthen international assistance to the region.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We welcome and thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel for her briefing on the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

We start by regretting that Security Council members were unable to reach an agreement on the terms of a draft presidential statement to be adopted today on the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We would like to appeal to the members of the Council to demonstrate flexibility and take into account the needs for action by the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

Angola commends the work of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel in the prevention of conflicts and good offices in mobilizing resources for crucial programmes and projects and in assisting the countries of the region, which face very complex and difficult circumstances. As mentioned in the report (S/2015/866) of the Secretary-General, the political, security and humanitarian situation, aggravated by recurrent conflicts, an unpredictable climate, epidemics, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and the activities of armed and terrorist groups, gravely affect the lives of millions of people across the region of the Sahel, with chronic food insecurity and malnutrition requiring dedicated attention by the international community.

A positive development is the commitment by the Sahel countries to find common solutions to grave problems affecting them, since the prevailing situation is a threat for the entire region and beyond. This has driven the Sahel community to a sense of ownership in their common endeavour, which constitutes the right approach to tackle the challenges they face. The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, should join forces with the international community in addressing the challenges facing the Sahel countries

and afford the necessary political support and material resources to a region living in conditions of extreme poverty.

Several countries of the region have either held or are in the process of holding elections, a process that should lead to the consolidation of democratic institutions and be supported by the international community through the provision of electoral assistance to enable them to organize free, transparent and peaceful elections. However, conflicts and criminal activities weaken the social fabric of the countries in the region, making it extremely difficult to implement programmes on good governance and development.

The Sahel region is facing huge security challenges, mainly due to the prevailing insecurity in Mali and Libya and the uncontrolled movement of armed and terrorist groups. In Mali, despite the signing of the peace agreement, armed groups, terrorists and extremists continue to destabilize the north of the country, indiscriminately attacking civilians, the Malian armed forces and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali personnel. The recent terrorist attack in Bamako is proof that peace in Mali is still a long way off.

In Libya, the presence of two parallel Governments and their inability to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham and other terrorist organizations fuel insecurity and instability in the Sahel. It is crucial for the parties in Libya to conclude the political process by empowering a national Government as a means of stepping up the fight against terrorism. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, should strengthen their assistance to the countries of the region. The decision of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel to enhance cooperation for sustained social and economic development and for security to combat terrorism and transnational crime deserves the financial and logistical support of the international community to enable them to continue to address the threat posed by terrorists, drug and human trafficking and mass migration of people from sub-Saharan Africa to the north and to Europe.

A case of a successful subregional initiative was the creation of the Multinational Joint Task Force by the Lake Chad Basin States and Benin, which joined forces to fight Boko Haram. The success of the Task Force's operations led to the recovery of areas previously under terrorist control and to the release of thousands of people. In addition to conflict-related violence, the report of

the Secretary-General underlines how the Sahel is affected by food insecurity, malnutrition, epidemics and natural disasters. We are deeply concerned over the fate of millions of people living in such dire conditions.

To conclude, we commend the Office of the Special Envoy for promoting the participation of women and youth in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and call on United Nations agencies, international organizations, donors and partners, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the European Union to contribute to the implementation of projects in the Sahel that address serious structural weaknesses in those countries. That would enable the Integrated Strategy and the Special Envoy to coordinate in achieving stability and development in the region.

Finally, we deem it important for the Security Council to receive more regular briefings on developments in the region. We commend the countries of the Sahel for their joint efforts to resolve outstanding challenges and for their continuing work with the international community in the maintenance of peace and security and for the region's development.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie for her detailed briefing. We believe that it is important for the Security Council to discuss the issue of the Sahel in a comprehensive manner. Her assessment of the situation in that vast region is of great usefulness. The ever-increasing number of challenges there give the effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel its continued relevance. The Russian Federation has welcomed that initiative from the outset, as it holds great promise.

A series of useful projects have been crafted to help the countries of the region overcome existing issues. There must be a shift to a practical phase that brings together a large number of participants from the various branches of the United Nations system under one umbrella. It is of paramount importance that, with support of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, interested States of the Sahel establish relevant mechanisms for cooperation. In time, that will allow the countries of the region to take a leading role and primary responsibility for the implementation of the comprehensive Strategy.

We are increasingly guided by the concrete outcomes of the work of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel. The operationalization of the Group of Five for the Sahel provides a nucleus for initiatives in that region. Specialized agencies for continental integration are working well at various levels, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of the Central African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

Of particular concern is the security threat to the Sahel, which over the past year has significantly increased. The instability in the Middle East and Syria and the lack of an internationally coordinated response are spreading to the countries of North Africa. That poorly controlled region has thus become a hotbed for terrorists and organized crime groups. Moreover, we note with interest that the southern Sahara is also a growing hotbed for such activities. We cannot overcome these challenges with the kind of outside intervention that occurred in Libya.

The fight against Boko Haram is a relatively successful example because it was undertaken by the Multinational Joint Task Force, although a comprehensive breakthrough is still far from being achieved. The counter-terrorism activities in the Sahel have not yet borne fruit, and terrorists believe that they enjoy full impunity. That was clearly demonstrated by the recent attacks launched by Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Bamako.

Joint local mechanisms for security, such as the Nouakchott Process, remain in their early stages but progress has been made. The lack of political sustainability, economic underdevelopment and social unrest lay the foundation for young people to become radicalized. We welcome the increased attention being paid by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the root causes of the crisis in the Sahel. We hope that the consistent implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, with the broad participation of partners, will lead to a qualitative improvement of the situation in the region.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ms. Guebre Sellassie, for her statement and I would like to reiterate my country's full support to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. I will focus my statement on three points.

First, the full implementation of the peace agreement in Mali is a crucial step in stabilizing the country and the Sahel. I take the opportunity to reiterate our condolences to the Government of Mali and the bereaved families of the victims, as well as to other States whose nationals who died in the terrorist attack in Bamako on 20 November. That attack was hardly fortuitous. The meeting for the implementation of the peace agreement was to take place that very same day. We must stop those who are seeking to derail the peace process.

The United Nations, and more broadly speaking the international community as a whole, must continue to fully support the stabilization of Mali and the implementation of the peace agreement. As announced by President Hollande on 22 October at the conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali hosted by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, France is providing more than €360 million in aid to Mali and nearly €80 million for the northern regions for the period 2015-2017.

Secondly, France is fully committed to assisting the countries of the Sahel in addressing the challenges before them. In addition to its activities within the European Union and the United Nations, France is continuing to develop its Sahelo-Saharan strategy in a comprehensive approach that brings together security, governance and development issues. France's Sahelo-Saharan strategy covers activities in six countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger and Chad. The strategy is focused on four priorities: contributing to improving the people's living conditions, strengthening States' capacities to fight terrorism and major trafficking networks, countering radicalization by supporting the development of education and the media, and encouraging and facilitating regional security cooperation. In that context, France allocates between €400 million and €500 million a year in bilateral assistance to the six countries covered by our strategy, all of which are priority recipients of our assistance.

The terrorist attacks perpetrated in Paris on 13 November only strengthen our conviction that the international community must pool its efforts to combat terrorism. In the Sahel, since August 2014 France's Operation Barkhane has been our military contribution to combating terrorism and improving the security situation in the Sahel region, with 3,500 French soldiers on the ground in five countries: Burkina Faso, Mali,

Mauritania, the Niger and Chad. Barkhane operations have led to the neutralization and capture of more than 100 terrorists in one year, including many leaders, while inflicting long-term damage on the operational and logistical capacities of terrorist groups.

My third and final point is that the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel should help the countries of the Sahel to establish projects that will benefit their people. The Strategy should improve coordination among the different United Nations agencies in the Sahel and make them more effective. Its goal is also and above all to help the Sahel countries to develop transnational projects in the three areas of governance, security and resilience. It is essential for the people of the Sahel to begin to enjoy the dividends of the United Nations commitment. We therefore eagerly await the recommendations of the forthcoming strategic review of the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, and hope that it will further strengthen the coherence of United Nations action in the Sahel and in West Africa.

During the past year, the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) have strengthened their cooperation, as demonstrated by the second summit of Heads of State in N'Djamena on 20 November, in which the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General participated. Joint military operations led by the G-5 Sahel States, with the support of Barkhane, represent a concrete response to the terrorist threat by the States of the region. France joins the Special Envoy in her goal of conjugating regional and international efforts on behalf of the Sahel.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I join earlier speakers in thanking Special Envoy Guebre Sellassie for her comprehensive briefing on progress towards implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the situation in the Sahel region.

As highlighted by Ms. Sellassie, the situation in the Sahel region remains a matter of concern. Since her last briefing (see S/PV.7335), the region has faced and continues to face many challenges and conflicts. Of particular concern is the ongoing threat posed by terrorism. The attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako last week and the ambush of the presidential bus in Tunis yesterday are cases in point. I take this opportunity to extend the solemn and deepest condolences of my Government to those affected and wish survivors a speedy recovery.

Malaysia stands in solidarity with countries of the Sahel and all countries similarly affected by the scourge of terrorism. We strongly and unequivocally condemn all acts and practices of terrorism, regardless of their motivation. We remain unwavering in our commitment to combating terrorism in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

We are equally concerned by the security situation resulting from the attacks by Boko Haram in the region. We are in particular gravely alarmed by the systematic and widespread abuses of children and violations of their human rights perpetrated by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups. In that regard, we welcome and support the efforts of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin to establish and operationalize the Multinational Joint Task Force. We are pleased to note that the Task Force has made steady progress in the fight against Boko Haram, and encourage the international community to continue supporting the Task Force. I also take this opportunity to register our appreciation to the countries that have contributed their efforts to the fight against Boko Haram, and to pay tribute to the soldiers who have lost their lives.

It is appalling that the number of displaced persons across the region has increased sharply, from 1.6 million in January 2014 to 4.4 million in 2015. It is particularly distressing to note that children have been particularly affected, with an estimated 1.4 million currently displaced in Nigeria and neighbouring countries. At the same time, we note that the humanitarian situation in the region remains precarious. In that connection, we urge Ms. Sellassie to continue her intensive work with the relevant international organizations to find a solution to the problem.

Against that background, we are encouraged by the enhanced cooperation between the Office of the Special Envoy and all relevant regional and subregional actors, particularly the African Union, the Economic Community of Western African States and the Group of Five for the Sahel. It is indeed crucial that relevant key partners intensify their efforts to address the challenges that continue to affect the region, including the proliferation of weapons, radicalism and violent extremism, food insecurity, trafficking in drugs and humans, lack of education and youth unemployment. We are particularly pleased to note that concerted efforts have been made to align national projects with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the

Sahel. These efforts, together with continuous and comprehensive engagement with the countries of the region, will enable us to formulate a truly integrated strategy that will bring sustainable development and prosperity to the Sahel region.

While effective coordination and cooperation among multinational partners, regional organizations and countries of the region are essential, Malaysia continues to believe in the importance of according primacy to national and regional initiatives. In that regard, the role of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel is imperative to the effective and successful implementation of initiatives and strategies on the Sahel. We also commend the strong commitment and support provided by the multitude of international partners and stakeholders to the Strategy.

Malaysia looks forward to the Secretary-General's strategic review of the Office of the Special Envoy, to be conducted in December. We remain hopeful that the strategic review will provide a realistic assessment, important insight and constructive recommendations on ways to further improve the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We are aware that the tasks facing the countries of the Sahel are monumental, and that international support is therefore crucial. I therefore wish to conclude by reaffirming Malaysia's commitment to working closely with all regional and international partners — particularly the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the countries of the region — towards the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

The President: In a moment I shall give the Special Envoy a chance to come back on any of the comments or questions raised. The representative of Lithuania raised two questions — one on how the Special Envoy would assess progress in countering terrorism and violent extremism; the other was how her Office has been strengthened in this period.

I shall first make a brief statement in my national capacity.

I want in particular to reiterate the United Kingdom's full support for the United Nations multidimensional approach and its partnership with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other regional organizations. This really is about prevention, security and development, and it really matters. As others have pointed out, Friday's terrorist

attack in Bamako sadly illustrates the security threats still facing Mali and the Sahel region. We strongly condemn, as others have done, this act of barbarity, and we still in solidarity with the Malian authorities and the families of those killed and injured. Now is the moment for countries of the region and their international partners to redouble their efforts to tackle the terrorist scourge and ensure security for their people.

Elsewhere in the region, Boko Haram continues to threaten populations in north-eastern Nigeria and the wider Lake Chad Basin. Their terror is not only targeting innocent people but is also forcing millions out of their homes, triggering a humanitarian crisis. This is only further worsening the overall food insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin region.

However, we cannot let these terrible acts cloud our perspective. In Mali, where security has such an impact on the whole of the region, we have seen progress in recent months. The fighting among armed groups in the summer has receded, and it has been replaced by a willingness to find a political solution to Mali's problems. We congratulate the Malian Government and other parties to the peace agreement for the commitment that they have shown. However, progress is fragile. We urge all parties to redouble their efforts. They owe it to all of the people of Mali, who deserve peace and security.

This year we have also seen progress in the region's ability, together with its neighbours, to confront those threats. In September, the coup in Burkina Faso was successfully dissolved, as a result of regionally led efforts. We expect that elections will soon mark the end of the transition back to democracy. That is a notable success.

We cannot lose sight of the challenges ahead. As the Special Envoy has mentioned, the Sahel is interconnected, and the challenges facing one country also affect its neighbours. Many are also transitional in nature. The report rightly highlights food security, organized crime and a demographic explosion, all of which put pressure on one of the poorest regions of the world. In that context, we will study very carefully the recommendations that she has just made to us.

Against that backdrop, the three pillars of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel — governance, security and resilience — remain the right way of bringing sustainable peace and development to the region. I am pleased that the range of projects that

have been launched and delivered under those three core themes have been noted in the report. We look forward to progress being made, in particular on human rights, including the rights of women, on organized crime, on terrorism — as the Special Envoy has just highlighted — and on finding upstream solutions, including on food security. We also look forward to the outcome and strategic review.

Finally, I want to thank Special Envoy Sellassie and her team. Together, they have made an important contribution to delivering the Integrated Strategy over the past year. I wish her every success as she takes that work forward in 2016.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Special Envoy Sellassie to address any of the comments we have heard and, in particular, the two questions that were raised.

Ms. Sellassie: On the question raised by the representative of Lithuania, on whether progress has been made by States in the region in terms of countering terrorism, the answer is that progress has been made. Some countries have even developed comprehensive strategies to counter terrorism. Many bilateral partners, including the African Union and the European Union, are working to strengthen the capacity of State actors. The United Nations, through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, are also working to build those countries' capacities so as to counter terrorism. However, the level and the multiplicity of the threats linked to terrorism in the region are such that they probably require further efforts. In that respect, I would like to say that there was a recommendation, at one point, for my Office to be provided with an expert on terrorism to support countries in the region, which never materialized. I would say that that would have benefited my Office and given us additional capacity to support the region.

There was a comment made by the representative of China about the projects that the United Nations is implementing in the region. I have a feeling that there is a perception among some members of the Council that the United Nations is not doing enough in terms of expectations. I would like to say that what we have been doing — at least at the regional level — is described at length in Secretary-General's report (S/2015/866). But I would like to add that what we are trying to address

in the Sahel are long-standing structural issues. That takes time. The added value of the Strategy is that it requires United Nations entities to work together in an integrated manner and develop regional projects, which is not an easy endeavour. What my Office has tried to do over the past year, first of all, is gain the support and the ownership of the countries of the region in those processes. We have been able to develop nine flagship projects, five of which have been launched. Those projects are being implemented in multiple countries by multiple agencies in a holistic approach.

Secondly, we consider those nine projects as our flagship projects because of their essential nature. We believe that they will have a quick and visible impact. Meanwhile, 10 other regional projects have been

launched by United Nations entities. I have not mentioned here all the work that has been done by United Nations entities at the national level within countries. We are therefore doing our best with the available capacities to deliver on expectations. But I want to reiterate that what we are trying to do is structural prevention. We are not trying to resolve ongoing conflict or address short-term issues. Rather, we are addressing long-term issues, which take time. I would like to insist on that and have the Council's understanding that what we are doing is a long-term endeavour.

The President: I thank Ms. Sellassie for the clarifications that she has provided.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.