



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on implementation of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel

*FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 17 March 2014*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1 The European Union (EU) remains deeply concerned by the crisis in the Sahel region. It reiterates its determination to support partners in addressing the region's key security and development challenges.
2. The Council welcomes the progress made in implementing the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and encourages its enhanced implementation in coordination with the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Sahel. The objectives of the EU Strategy in the fields of security, peace-building, conflict prevention, countering radicalisation and development remain valid and the link between security and development will remain at the heart of EU policies and operations in the region. Responding in a dynamic manner to the evolution of the situation in the region is key to ensure the efficacy of the EU comprehensive approach. In this context, the Council invites the EEAS, the EUSR for the Sahel and the Commission to develop a new regional action plan covering the next steps of implementation of the Sahel Strategy.
3. The Council invites the EEAS, the EUSR for the Sahel and the Commission to extend the implementation of the Strategy to Burkina Faso and Chad while intensifying relevant activities in Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Political dialogue on conflict prevention and security issues in the Sahel region will be stepped up also in relevant West African and neighbouring countries including Senegal, Nigeria and Cameroon as well as countries of the Maghreb.

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4. International support to the Sahel region needs to be accompanied by sustained efforts to find a lasting solution to the roots of the ongoing crises in the north of Mali and the wider region. Security and development in the Sahel region is also strongly linked to stability in Libya. In Mali, the EU fully supports the work of the United Nations stabilisation mission MINUSMA to help create conditions conducive to the full restoration of State authority, order and security in the north of Mali. The EU strongly urges all Malian parties to begin credible and inclusive consultations open to all communities and to all non-terrorist armed groups of northern Mali with the aim of achieving broadly founded and lasting peace through a sustainable political solution. The EU will also continue to support the implementation of the plan for the sustainable recovery of Mali.
5. In line with the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality and humanity, the EU will also continue to provide humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable people, on the basis of needs, especially this coming months to ensure a coordinated and effective response to the current food crisis in the Sahel region and to link relief, rehabilitation, and development wherever conditions allow it. In that perspective, the EU will continue to foster resilience building and relevant coordination efforts by Western Africa regional organisations and partners in the framework of the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR).
6. With regard to development in the Sahel, the EU will continue to support sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development and regional integration, drawing lessons from the past. The Council commends the progress made towards the implementation of an Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and West Africa. The EU will provide specific support to regional infrastructures that bring the periphery closer to the centre, sustainable social services especially health and education, and sustainable agriculture, food and nutrition security. The EU will encourage in particular local and national development policies addressing the specific socioeconomic and human security needs of border areas as a way to improve territorial control and state authority throughout territories. Due attention will be paid to trading, trafficking and migratory flows including return and readmission and the synergies between migration and development. The EU will continue to promote democracy, human rights, decentralisation policies, good governance including an independent and fair justice system at local and regional levels, and it will encourage the fight against corruption as well as counter-radicalisation projects as a means of conflict prevention, building on local and national initiatives where possible. The EU will continue to implement joint programming within the Sahel countries in order to further increase the effectiveness of EU development cooperation.
7. In the field of security, the EU will continue to provide support to national and regional endeavours related to security sector reform and integrated border management and to national efforts in the fight against terrorism and organised crime, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings, notably through the ongoing CSDP missions in Libya, Mali and Niger as well as the future civilian mission in Mali. The EU will promote synergies between those missions while integrating lessons learnt from previous missions. The EU welcomes the efforts of the African Union and other regional actors to promote enhanced coordination in the field of intelligence and counter-terrorism as well as optimal allocation of national assets and capacities.

8. The primary responsibility and ownership for peace, security and development is with the governments of the Sahelian region. Regional and international coordination is key to ensure the effectiveness of international efforts in support to local and regional endeavours and the EU will work in close cooperation with regional organisations and national governments in the Sahel to ensure a broadly rooted implementation of the EU Sahel Strategy. The EU welcomes the decision taken by the Heads of States of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso in Nouakchott on 16 February 2014 to establish a permanent framework for their own regional coordination efforts. The EU also welcomes the conclusions of the international high level meeting on the Sahel held in Brussels on 6 February 2014, in particular the recognition that the international coordination platform for the Sahel should constitute the overall coordination mechanism for all existing strategies in the region, including the UN integrated strategy for the Sahel. The EU reaffirms its will to contribute actively together with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and others to the work of the United Nations and the African Union Commission in support to this platform."
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