

Human rights in the Sahel region

European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2013 on the situation of human rights in the Sahel region (2013/2020(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the key UN and African human rights conventions and treaties, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
- having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol thereto,
- having regard to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa,
- having regard to the Rome Statute, adopted on 17 July 1998, which entered into force on 1 July 2002,
- having regard to the Cotonou Agreement of 23 June 2000, revised on 22 June 2010,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 25 June 2012 on the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, and the Council Decisions of 25 July 2012 appointing the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights¹ and of 18 March 2013 appointing the EUSR for the Sahel², in particular the human rights articles in his mandate,
- having regard to Council conclusions on the Sahel, in particular Mali, including the Conclusions of 21 March 2011 on the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, and more recent conclusions, including those of 17 and 31 January, 18 February, 22 April, 27 May and 24 June 2013,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, and to UN Security Council Resolutions 1325(2000) and 1820(2008) on Women, Peace and Security,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 14 June 2011 on the EU indicators for the Comprehensive Approach to the EU implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325(2000) and 1820(2008) on Women, Peace and Security,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights,
- having regard to the EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them,

¹ OJ L 200, 27.7.2012, p. 21.

² OJ L 75, 19.3.2013, p. 29.

- having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions and the reports of the UN Secretary-General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the Sahel, in particular Mali,
- having regard to the UN Secretary-General's report to the UN Security Council on the situation in the Sahel region, dated 14 June 2013, and the attached UN integrated strategy for the Sahel,
- having regard to the UN Human Development Report 2013,
- having regard to the European Commission's Humanitarian Implementation Plans for the Sahel,
- having regard to the Joint Chairs' Conclusions of the International Donor Conference 'Together for a New Mali', held in Brussels on 15 May 2013,
- having regard to the high-level Conference on Women's Leadership in the Sahel held in Brussels on 9 April 2013, at the initiative of the European Union, the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel and UN Women,
- having regard to the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation (2010-2015),
- having regard to the UN Secretary-General's report to the UN Security Council on Western Sahara, dated 8 April 2013, in particular its reference to the inter-connectedness between Western Sahara and the situation in the Sahel, and having regard to the Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel drawn up by the European External Action Service (EEAS), in particular its statement that the problems in the Sahel are cross-border in nature and closely intertwined, and that only a regional focus and a holistic strategy which also includes neighbouring Maghreb countries will enable progress to be made in the region,
- having regard to the report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, dated 28 February 2013, regarding his mission to Morocco, including Western Sahara,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2010 on the situation in Western Sahara¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2012 on the annual report on human rights and democracy in the world 2011 and the European Union's policy on the matter²,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 February 2013 on the 22nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council³,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2012 on Parliament's position on the 19th Session of the UN Human Rights Council⁴,

¹ OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 87.

² Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0503.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0055.

⁴ OJ C 249 E, 30.8.2013, p. 41.

- having regard to the annual report on the Common Foreign and Security Policy from the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the European Parliament, endorsed by the Council on 4 October 2012,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the opinions of the Committee on Development and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0325/2013),
- A. whereas the Sahel is one of the poorest regions of the world, which confronts grave problems regarding human rights, the rule of law, security and armed conflict, as well as economic and social development; whereas the extreme poverty in the region is reflected in the UN Human Development Index for 2012, ranking Niger (186th), Chad (184th), Burkina Faso (183rd) and Mali (182nd) among the six least-developed countries in the world;
 - B. whereas one of the defining characteristics of the region, mostly generated by political instability, poverty and unsecured borders, is the spill-over effect, which inherently causes shared human rights challenges throughout the entire Sahel; whereas this characteristic outlines the need for a well-coordinated and holistic approach towards the entire eco-geographic region of the Sahel;
 - C. whereas establishing democracy, peace and good governance is a crucial challenge for the Sahel states; whereas these states must embark on the process of promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, eradicating discrimination against women and minorities and promoting education and ethnic reconciliation;
 - D. whereas the scope of this resolution encompasses the countries identified by the EU Sahel Strategy, specifically Mauritania, Mali, Niger and relevant parts of Burkina Faso and Chad; whereas the broader geographic and ecological definition of the Sahel also remains crucial with regard to the region's shared human rights challenges deriving from conflict and various human security failures, including state fragility; whereas this report will also discuss the human rights situation in the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps;
 - E. whereas the maternal mortality rate in Mali, estimated at 1 100 deaths per 100 000 live births, is the highest in the world according to UN data; whereas the UN Human Development Report 2013 singles out Niger and Mali as having particularly high mortality rates among children under the age of five, with the rate rising above 200 deaths per 1 000 live births where mothers are lacking any education; whereas the World Bank estimate of primary school enrolment rates for Niger and Mali are among the worst in the world, standing at 62 % and 63 % respectively; whereas the UN estimates that some 18 million people were affected by the severe food and nutrition crisis of 2012 in the Sahel and West Africa; whereas the Commission estimates that in 2013, 10.3 million people in the region are still facing food insecurity, of whom 4.2 million are Malians, with 1.4 million children under the age of five at risk of severe acute malnutrition and another 3.1 million at risk of moderate acute malnutrition; whereas the Commission has been instrumental in the establishment of the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative in the Sahel (AGIR-Sahel) and pledged EUR 517 million in humanitarian and development aid for 2012-2013;

- F. whereas sections of these countries' populations do not have access to care and suffer from numerous endemic diseases such as cholera, meningitis, measles and HIV/AIDS; whereas the death toll arising from HIV/AIDS is high, with 11 000 people afflicted with the diseases dying every year in Chad, 7 100 in Burkina Faso, 4 400 in Mali and 4 300 in Niger;
- G. whereas the Sahel states are rich in natural resources, particularly oil, gold and uranium, but whereas the income from the extraction of these resources is not fed back into the local economy in a sufficient manner so as to enable these states to develop;
- H. whereas civil wars and ethnic conflicts are leading to population movements and the establishment of refugee camps, such as those in Mentao (Burkina Faso), Mangaize (Niger), M'Bera (Mauritania) and Breijing (Chad); whereas living conditions and hygiene in these camps are deplorable;
- I. whereas in the last 20 years elections have been held on a regular basis in Mali; whereas prior to the coup d'état, the country was considered a relative success story for democracy in Africa;
- J. whereas the Malian crisis is manifold and cannot be reduced to an ethnic conflict; whereas, however, Tuareg resentments and aspirations for independence or greater autonomy for northern Mali were exploited by armed jihadist groups, who in early 2012 allied with, and subsequently displaced, the secular National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in their rebellion; whereas these groups, in particular Ansar Dine, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), further benefited from the instability arising from the subsequent coup in Bamako, as well as from the wider regional instability, and fuelled by the uncontrolled arsenals in Libya; whereas the impending existential threat to the Malian state itself, combined with the systematic violations of human rights in the north, precipitated the armed interventions by French, African and UN forces to halt the atrocities and human rights violations committed by the extremist groups, to restore democracy, the rule of law and the authority of the Malian state, and to re-establish respect for human rights; whereas a preliminary peace agreement was signed on 18 June 2013 between the Malian Government and rebel forces; whereas the situation in Mali requires a response that goes beyond addressing security threats, including long-term commitment and decisive action on the part of the international community to tackle deep-rooted political, developmental and humanitarian challenges;
- K. whereas the presence of terrorist groups in the Sahel causes serious instability and insecurity in the region, with hostage-taking and violent attacks; whereas the Sahel is a transit zone for drug-trafficking by criminal gangs from Latin America; whereas drug-traffickers are often linked to terrorist groups which provide security for them while in transit; whereas the presence of these traffickers is a source of instability both for the Sahel and for the European Union, which is often the final destination of this trade;
- L. whereas the governments of the Sahel region need to involve the populations concerned in order to reach a durable solution to the crisis; whereas the participation of women, in particular, in the resolution of the Sahel crisis is a necessary condition for reaching long-term stability; whereas the fight against impunity, including impunity for gender-based violence during conflict, is fundamental to the stability of the region and the building of lasting peace;

- M. whereas the EU has paid increased attention to the Sahel, as evidenced by the adoption of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel in 2011, the launch of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP Sahel Niger) in July 2012 and the EU CSDP Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali in February 2013, and the nomination of an EUSR for the Sahel; whereas the mandate of the new EUSR, adopted on 18 March 2013, includes a strong human rights component;
- N. whereas complex and interdependent problems require a comprehensive, coordinated approach making use of the full range of EU instruments and policies, linking EU objectives on crisis management, the security sector, development co-operation and ecological sustainability to EU efforts in the areas of human rights, democracy support and the rule of law; whereas a comprehensive strategy for the region should encompass effective coordination via the VP/HR among relevant Commissioners, such as the Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, the EEAS, EUSRs, including the Special Representatives for Human Rights and the Sahel, and the EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator, as well as Member States; whereas an effective solution to the current crisis must encompass economic and social policies that aim to improve the living standards of the population;
- O. whereas EU policies should focus in particular on rural development and agriculture, in order to ensure food security as a contribution to durable socio-economic development in sub-Saharan Africa; whereas the Commission, in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP), among others, launched the AGIR-Sahel initiative, aspiring to increase inter-organisational cooperation, as part of the EU's Comprehensive Approach, in addressing the food crisis in the Sahel; whereas the partners identified a minimum investment of EUR 750 million to provide a social safety net to protect the most vulnerable if and when drought hits again in the future;
- P. whereas infringements of human rights and the political, environmental, developmental and humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region affect women in particular, who are often victims of discrimination, exceptional physical and human insecurity, chronic poverty and marginalisation; whereas gender equality, the political and economic empowerment of women, the promotion of gender equality and the defence of women's rights are crucial to reducing poverty and encouraging sustainable development; whereas an increasingly restrictive social environment is limiting women's mobility and productivity, and ultimately their capacity to function as effective leaders and defenders of women's rights; whereas women in the Sahel region make up the majority of small-scale farmers and yet they are penalised in terms of land rights; whereas this lack of ownership over land contributes to poverty among women; whereas studies show that if women are educated and can earn and control income, a number of positive results follow, for example: maternal and infant mortality declines, the health and nutrition of women and children improve, agricultural productivity rises, climate change can be mitigated, population growth slows, economies expand and cycles of poverty are broken;
- Q. whereas at the July 2012 London Summit on Family Planning more than one hundred governments, international agencies and NGOs set themselves the objective of investing an additional USD 4 billion by 2020 so as to increase the number of women using

contraception in the world's 69 poorest countries, which include the Sahel countries, by 120 million; whereas this funding is in addition to the current figure of USD 10 billion;

- R. whereas the Sahel countries are signatories of the Cotonou Agreement; whereas partnership with the European Union is based on mutually agreed provisions on human rights and good governance and involves development aid, good governance, the promotion of human rights and humanitarian aid;
- S. whereas EU co-operation with the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Arab Maghreb Union, regional human rights institutions and UN human rights bodies and civil society organisations remains a pre-requisite for productively advocating the protection and advancement of human rights in the Sahel;
- T. whereas on 14 June 2013 the UN Secretary General proposed, in its report to the UN Security Council, the adoption of an integrated strategy for the Sahel built around three strategic goals, namely enhancing inclusive and effective governance throughout the region, building national and regional security mechanisms capable of addressing cross-border threats and integrating humanitarian and development plans and interventions in order to build long-term resilience;
- U. whereas a ceasefire in Western Sahara between the Moroccan Government and the Polisario Front has been in place since 1991; whereas the UN considers Western Sahara a non-self-governing territory; whereas the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic is a full member of the AU and currently recognised by over 35 UN states, but not by the UN collectively or by any EU Member State; whereas Morocco has legal obligations to account for its exercise of de facto administering power over the territory and people of Western Sahara; whereas the UN, under the auspices of the Security Council, is acting as a mediator to find a solution to the conflict; whereas according to the UN Secretary-General, however, no progress has been made on the fundamental issues of the future status of the territory; whereas a referendum on the status of Western Sahara, first agreed on principle in 1988, has still not taken place;
- V. whereas Morocco has signed and ratified several international and human rights treaties such as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture (CAT), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (UNPHRD);
- W. whereas UN Security Council Resolutions 1754(2007), 1783(2007) , 1871(2009), 1920(2010), 1979(2011), 2044(2012) and 2099(2013) call on the neighbouring states to cooperate fully with the United Nations and with each other, and to strengthen their involvement to end the current impasse and to achieve progress towards a political solution;
- X. whereas the refugee camps near Tindouf in Algeria, having first been established thirty-seven years ago, remain the second longest-operating in the world; whereas a political stalemate precludes any realistic prospect of their dissolution, or the resettlement or repatriation of their inhabitants, in the near future;

- Y. whereas both the Moroccan Government and the Polisario Front have been accused of human rights violations; whereas the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) does not include a human rights dimension in its mandate, and offers no mechanism for alleged human rights violations to be reported; whereas UN Security Council Resolution 2099 of 25 April 2013 extended the mandate of MINURSO; whereas the Secretary General's report of 8 April 2013 devotes three pages to the issue of human rights; whereas the UN Security Council and EU Member States in the UN Security Council failed to support a US proposal to give MINURSO a human rights mandate, which led to popular demonstrations in Western Sahara;

General considerations

1. Expresses its deep concern over the human rights situation in the Sahel region, which has been aggravated by multiple crises in the political, social, economic and ecological spheres; stresses that deeply enmeshed challenges require an integrated and comprehensive policy response and a political solution involving the various parties to the conflict;
2. Notes that the situation of human rights in the Sahel has acquired greater international prominence as a result of the armed conflict in Mali and the intervention by the French, African and UN forces; acknowledges that this conflict has created specific problems in that country, as well as exacerbating structural challenges already present in Mali and elsewhere in the region, such as in Libya; stresses, however, that the immediate concerns in Mali should not deflect attention from the chronic and pervasive problems that seriously impact on human rights in the rest of the Sahel, in particular, organised crime, slavery and human trafficking, arms and drug trafficking, jihadi extremism and radicalisation, fragile governance and institutional corruption, systemic and debilitating poverty, child soldiers and discrimination against women;
3. Points out that the permeability of borders is a characteristic feature of the countries in the region; stresses that the worsening of the situation in the Sahel is closely linked to the massive influx of weapons into Northern Mali following the war in Libya, whereas in other countries in the region Libyan rebels were routinely disarmed at the borders; renews its call for regulation and strict checks on arms sales so as to ensure that Member States do not become involved in the proliferation of conflicts;
4. Welcomes the increased attention to human rights in EU policy; notes that the UN has developed a comprehensive strategy on the Sahel with a strong human rights dimension; recalls that the EU and the countries of the Sahel, as signatories to the Cotonou Agreement, have assumed mutual obligations to protect human rights and democratic principles, based on the rule of law and transparent and accountable governance; points out that the Sahel states are parties to most international treaties for the protection of human rights, women's rights and the rights of the child;
5. Emphasises the important role played by the EU, as the world's largest aid donor, in addressing the development challenges faced by the Sahel region; stresses the importance of engaging other international actors in efforts such as eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality rates, according to the Millennium Development Goals;

Human rights in armed conflict situations

6. Attaches particular urgency to the human rights situation in Mali, with reports of serious human rights violations in northern Mali by armed Tuareg rebels as well as jihadi groups; notes that alleged crimes include mass rape, torture, mutilation and cruel treatment, including amputation and public floggings, public stoning for perceived adultery, ethnic-based violence, attempted ethnic cleansing, extrajudicial and summary executions of prisoners, the massacre of Malian soldiers, illegal arrests and detention, the passing of sentences without due process, forced marriages and sexual slavery, intentionally directing attacks against cultural objects, and the destruction and looting of property; is deeply concerned about the new trends in terrorist and criminal techniques, including suicide bombings, kidnapping and hostage-taking, and the use of children as human shield; notes that, since January 2013, there have also been numerous reports of human rights violations by elements of the Malian security forces and, to a lesser extent, vigilante groups, against suspected jihadists or those perceived to have cooperated with rebel groups; notes that those targeted have largely come from the Tuareg, Arab and Peuhl communities, and that the army has been frequently accused of ethnic-based reprisals; expresses grave concern that alleged offences have included torture and inhuman treatment, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial and summary executions both of prisoners and civilians; expresses further concern at reports in southern Mali of killings, torture and disappearances by the military of members of the security forces who were loyal to the pre-coup Touré regime; notes, moreover, with grave alarm the reports of landmines killing and maiming Malian civilians, including children; calls on all combatants to desist from using landmines, and to work swiftly and effectively with regional and international actors to ensure the full removal of these armaments;
7. Welcomes the fact that a peace accord was signed in Mali on 18 June 2013 in order to pave the way for the successfully held presidential election and for peace negotiations between the Malian authorities and armed insurgent groups in northern Mali, and that the signatories have all promised to end human rights violations in every form; embraces their commitment to unity, dialogue and the restoration of constitutional order; recognises, nevertheless, that this is a preliminary agreement which must be followed by action on both sides to bring the conflict to a definitive end; urges the Malian authorities and their international partners, to this end, to pay close attention to the new patterns of human rights violations, particularly reprisals based on ethnicity, that have emerged since the recovery of certain parts of northern Mali, and which could constitute a grave obstacle to peace-building and reconciliation if not properly addressed; welcomes the fact that the Malian Government has set up units to monitor military operations in northern Mali and has opened investigations into the human rights violations allegedly committed by certain elements of the Malian armed forces; calls upon the armed forces to show professionalism as they consolidate themselves in formerly rebel-held areas; calls, moreover, upon the Malian Government to redouble its efforts to facilitate the reporting of abuses both in their current operations and in any future offensives, including through support to the National Human Rights Commission, and to respect due process when interrogating suspected militants; reiterates its condemnation of the reported atrocities committed against the civilian population, prisoners and soldiers; recalls the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor's determination of a reasonable basis to believe that atrocities committed in the Mali conflict may constitute war crimes; believes, moreover, that some atrocities could constitute crimes against humanity;
8. Notes with grave concern that a further reason for the escalating destabilisation in Mali is the growing level of corruption, leaving the population of the north, including Tuareg,

Songhai, Arabs and others out of the range of international aid; emphasises that one of the most dangerous effects of corruption is the creation of cultural and ethnic separation between northern and southern Mali;

9. Notes with grave concern the UNHCR's estimate of almost 300 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Mali, in addition to over 175 000 refugees in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, and to a lesser extent Algeria; calls for immediate action in those refugee camps and those parts of northern Mali which are reportedly suffering from cholera, extreme food insecurity and alarming levels of child mortality, far exceeding the figures for the region as a whole, as a result of malnutrition and lack of access to safe water and healthcare; appeals to international donors to honour their financial commitments as a matter of urgency and, without delay, to raise the USD 290 million needed to enable the UNHCR to halt the severe food crisis now affecting 3.4 million Malians; stresses the importance of securing the refugees' and IDPs' safety, and facilitating their orderly return to their home communities as a key element of national reconciliation;
10. Draws attention to the suffering of women in the recent Mali conflict; specifically condemns as a war crime the use of abduction and rape as weapons of war; expects the EU and other international partners of Mali to cooperate closely with the Malian authorities to implement the commitments inherent in UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 and in the EU Comprehensive Approach; draws attention to the importance of establishing transitional justice mechanisms to end impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence;
11. Urges the EU and the Sahel countries to implement fully the following UN Security Council resolutions: Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, which calls for women's participation in all aspects and at all levels of conflict resolution, Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and the subsequent Resolutions 1888, 1889 and 1960, which build on the aforementioned resolutions; asks, therefore, for women's participation in peace processes to be emphasised and guaranteed and for the need to include gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention, peace-keeping operations, humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction to be recognised; deplores the extreme suffering inflicted on women, simply because they are women, in conflict zones; maintains that action of this kind, including the rape of girls by soldiers, forced prostitution, forced impregnation of women, sexual slavery, rape, sexual harassment and consensual abduction (by means of seduction) are crimes which must not be ignored; affirms that the EU must treat these as fundamental problems to be taken into account; emphasises that it is essential to ensure access to abortion for women and girls who have been raped in situations of armed conflict;
12. Points out that women are frequently discriminated against when it comes to recognising their work in campaigning for peace; recalls that where more women are regularly engaged in conflict resolution and peace-building processes, they play a key role in peace negotiations, broadening the scope of reconstruction, rehabilitation and peace building; encourages, therefore, the participation of women in all national, regional and international reconciliation efforts for Mali, and especially the north of the country; calls for national action plans under UN Security Council Resolution 1325 to be subject to regular reviews and for their priority points to be updated regularly;

13. Abhors the grave violations and brutal acts of violence perpetrated against children in Mali, including the well-documented recruitment and use of child soldiers by nearly all of the armed groups active in the north, including government forces; emphasises the importance of allocating sufficient resources to the tasks of demobilisation and rehabilitation of child soldiers; welcomes, to this end, the draft agreement being drawn up between the Malian Government and the UN enabling child soldiers involved in the armed groups to be handed over to UN representatives, and applauds the actions of UNICEF to reintegrate these children; expresses deep concern at the findings of the latest UN report on children and armed conflict, which underlines how the character and tactics of the conflict in Mali have created unprecedented threats to children; condemns in the strongest terms the killing and maiming of children, rape and sexual violence, forced marriages, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and restrictions on girls' access to education, that have occurred during the Mali conflict; notes that a majority of schools in the north have not yet reopened, and urges for immediate action to enable them to do so; draws attention to the cases of abandonment of children born as a result of rape crimes in northern Mali as a worrying trend for which a solution needs to be found urgently; expresses deep concern, furthermore, at reports of children being detained along with adults and undergoing interrogation without due protection; welcomes, in this connection, the UN Security Council's aim to provide specific protection for women and children affected by armed conflict;
14. Calls on all the Sahel countries to embark on a policy of prevention and protection aimed at ensuring that children will not be recruited by force by armed groups; calls on the Sahel countries to refrain from recruiting children to their regular armies and to condemn any person guilty of this war crime;
15. Deplores the attempted obliteration of northern Mali's precious cultural heritage, with armed groups destroying ancient Sufi shrines and other cherished monuments in Timbuktu and Gao, along with approximately 4 200 ancient manuscripts, ethnic Dogon ceremonial masks and cultural houses (togunas) in Douentza, as well as libraries in Kidal and elsewhere; considers that the cultural desecration witnessed in northern Mali constitutes a war crime; welcomes and calls for EU support to the UNESCO Action Plan for the Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage and the Safeguarding of Ancient Manuscripts in Mali;
16. Welcomes the French military operation 'Serval' launched on 11 January 2013 and its commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Mali as a first step towards the reconstruction and democratisation of Mali; welcomes, subsequently, UN Security Council Resolution 2100 of 25 April 2013 and its strong human rights focus, as well as the instruction in the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to monitor, help investigate and report to the Security Council on any abuses or violations of human rights or violations of international humanitarian law; welcomes the integration of a human rights training component into the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali;
17. Expresses its support for the International Support Mission (ISM) to Mali, MINUSMA, which took over from the ISM in 1 July 2013, and the EUCAP Sahel Mission; welcomes the proposal by the UN Secretary-General of 14 June 2013 to establish a 'United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel' to tackle all aspects of the crisis: enhancing governance, combating crime (trafficking of drugs, people, weapons and cigarettes, money laundering)

and terrorism, and delivering humanitarian aid; welcomes, in particular, those objectives of the strategy which aim to enhance effective and global governance throughout the region and to integrate humanitarian and development plans and interventions with a view to boosting long-term resilience;

18. Welcomes the important role played by the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), which has laid the foundations for MINUSMA; welcomes, furthermore, the substantial African contingent within the MINUSMA mission, and in particular the AU's decision to send human rights observers embedded within it; hopes that both these features continue as standard in African operations; welcomes the fact that both Malian authorities and armed groups promised in the interim peace accord to facilitate the observers' deployment; welcomes the arrival of observers in Gao and Timbuktu, and hopes that it will soon be possible also to deploy observers in Kidal, reflecting the importance of investigating allegations of human rights abuses in the north by all sides of the Mali conflict; welcomes, furthermore, the Commission's support to these observers and its endeavour to train and deploy additional local and regional civil society observers through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights; urges the EU to learn lessons from this experience and, drawing on the assistance of stakeholders in Mali's national and local civil society, to explore appropriate ways to have available pools of trained experts, who could be quickly deployed on the ground in urgent situations to give professional advice to EU policy-makers if necessary;
19. Draws attention to the urgent need to enhance compliance with the international human rights and humanitarian law norms in armed conflict situations; calls on the High Representative to learn lessons from the tragic events in Mali and other recent conflicts in order to review the EU guidelines on international humanitarian law (IHL), seek more effective implementation of those guidelines, and support the ongoing initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss Government to reform the current international governance framework regarding IHL;
20. Welcomes the conclusions of the International Donor Conference 'Together for a New Mali', held on 15 May 2013; stresses that donors have undertaken to donate EUR 3.25 billion to Mali in the next two years, with the EU leading the pledges with EUR 520 million; commends the Malian Government's Plan for the Sustainable Recovery of Mali (PRED); welcomes the particular attention given to ensuring the transparency of public accounts and those of the extractive industries; supports the Malian Government's approval of the draft law against illicit enrichment, and emphasises the importance of carrying out the Donor Conference commitment to monitor carefully the law's systematic application once it has been adopted; regrets that the conference conclusions did not reflect the stated EU commitment to move towards a rights-based approach in development cooperation; calls on the EU and its international partners to implement their mutual commitments as part of an effective and coordinated follow-up to the conference; reiterates the need to link aid with institutional reform and discernible social and political development; commends, furthermore, the constructive involvement of regional actors; calls, bearing in mind the extent of the widespread corruption within the Malian authorities, for all the necessary assurances and safeguards to be put in place in order to ensure that the sums paid out can be used as soon as possible to help the Malian people;
21. Reiterates the importance of the EU's human rights clause in any agreement with third countries, including those of the Sahel region; considers that the clause is one of EU's

most efficient instruments which can lead not only to the sustainable development of least-developed countries, but also to the proper respect for and protection of human rights in those countries;

22. Considers that fighting impunity, providing redress to victims and prosecuting all perpetrators of serious human rights violations, irrespective of affiliation and status, including in connection with gender-based violence in conflicts, which is an affront to women's dignity, is key to ensuring lasting peace and stability in Mali; welcomes, therefore, the Malian Government's referral of the situation to the ICC and the ICC Prosecutor's opening of formal investigations, and the stated anticipation by the Malian Government and rebel groups, in Article 18 of the preliminary peace accord, of an international commission of inquiry to investigate alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations and breaches of international and humanitarian law throughout Mali; calls on the EU and other international partners of Mali to prioritise the issue of impunity during peace negotiations, to help the government to pursue its objective of investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of abuses and implementing the provisions of the interim peace accord, and to ensure that the perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence are brought to justice; reiterates that this must include crimes and atrocities committed by all sides;
23. Welcomes the Malian Government's establishment of a National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation on 6 March 2013, to serve for a two-year term; maintains that the National Commission must be as broadly representative as possible, with practical results produced as soon as possible; welcomes in particular, to this end, the National Commission's inclusive membership, as evidenced by its vice-presidents, as a commitment to inclusiveness and plurality in the political process; notes that the National Commission is tasked with documenting human rights violations that have occurred since the beginning of the conflict; encourages further the Commission to explore the issues which gave rise to the Malian crisis, to investigate openly and comprehensively allegations of abuses and discrimination against Tuareg communities since Malian independence, and to make recommendations for meaningful improvements; further welcomes, furthermore, the Malian Government's appointment of an envoy to continue dialogue with the armed groups in the north; expresses, in this connection, its sincere hope that the post-electoral landscape in Mali will facilitate enhanced dialogue and trust between communities as a pre-requisite for peace and stability, and that all Malian communities will commit to educating children about mutual tolerance and respect; calls on the EU and its partners in the international community to support fully this process of national reconciliation and inclusive dialogue;
24. Emphasises that the various conflicts in the Sahel region have led to greater population displacement within states and to an increase in the number of refugees; expresses grave concern at the multiple refugee crises and the situation of refugees in the region, including many unrelated to the Mali crisis; draws particular attention to the thousands of Darfuri refugees in eastern Chad, and Chadian returnees from Darfur, who lack clean water, adequate shelter and healthcare, and notes that the semi-arid climate risks heightening competition for resources with the host populations, and therefore also the potential for instability; draws attention, moreover, to the plight of many thousands of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) in southern Chad, where flooding threatens homes and agriculture; echoes, in this connection, the UNHCR's call to increase financial and logistical support to Chad's security forces protecting the camps, particularly in the light

of reported attacks on humanitarian compounds; expresses further concern for those in Niger fleeing the recent fighting in northern Nigeria; calls on the international community in general to increase the proportion of aid to the Sahel's refugee camps where necessary, and to help avoid further humanitarian crises among the region's refugee populations; calls on the EU, the Sahel countries, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the African Union and ECOWAS to coordinate their refugee policies in order to provide assistance to refugees, guarantee human security for the most vulnerable groups and establish self-sufficiency programmes; encourages host countries to work with the UN and other actors to improve, in particular, access to shelter, sanitation, healthcare, water, nutrition and education, and to protect at-risk children; points out that, in addition to assisting refugees and internally displaced persons and guaranteeing their protection, efforts must be made to boost economic security and links with separated families for refugees and internally displaced persons, and to improve documentation for refugees so that, wherever possible, they can return to their home regions;

25. Calls on the Sahel countries and on local and regional authorities to implement policies to guarantee the safety of refugees, displaced persons and the most vulnerable groups, with a view to combating terrorism, violence against women, exploitation and trafficking (of drugs, weapons, goods, and human beings);

Accountability and reform of governmental, judicial and security institutions

26. Considers that the current human rights challenges in the Sahel cannot be disaggregated from a general crisis of governance, encompassing widespread corruption in public office, weak provision of basic services, poor implementation of social and economic rights, and particularly in the vast and often sparsely populated Saharan regions, profound challenges in upholding the rule of law and maintaining effective border controls; regrets the ensuing harm to the legitimacy of the region's institutions and political systems; fears the risk of further conflict or disorder in the future if such issues are not adequately addressed; points out that populations have to enjoy access to their natural resources and to education, health, and public services, as these forms of access are fundamental rights that have to find effective expression in order to provide a sustainable solution to the instability in the Sahel;
27. Notes with great concern the role of these factors in facilitating the regional surge in international organised crime and terrorist networks; emphasises the serious threats that they pose to human rights, regional stability, state governance, the rule of law and consequently development prospects, and the need to confront such threats for the benefit of Sahelian populations; expresses particular alarm at the 'trafficking highways', which, helped by the porousness of the borders, stretch across Africa from west to east, and south to north from the West African coast, facilitating the transport of firearms, narcotics, cigarettes, oil, counterfeit medicine and people; draws attention to the impact of these activities on the wider region, as well as the EU, which is the destination for much of the illicit traffic; points to the UN Secretary-General's recent Sahel report, which concluded that the historic trade routes across the Sahel are the most vulnerable to terrorist and criminal networks; applauds the efforts of the Sahel countries to fight terrorism and organised crime, not least where heavy weapons traffic is concerned, and urges them to intensify regional coordination and cooperation, redouble their efforts to secure their shared land borders and, to this end, seek the involvement of the ECOWAS; encourages these states further, in conjunction with the UN and other international actors and

partners, to develop a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy, including the collection and analysis of data, the prosecution and punishment of traffickers, and measures for the rehabilitation and social integration of all those, mostly women and girls, who are victims of trafficking; urges the leaders of the Sahel countries to cooperate in strengthening law enforcement systems with a view to eradicating all forms of illicit trafficking, but in particular trafficking in human beings, which affects some of the youngest and poorest women in the region;

28. Notes that the Sahel risks further destabilisation from the proliferation of light weaponry originating in Libya and other residual effects of the situation in that country; stresses that instability and poor governance in Libya aggravate regional arms trafficking and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), drugs trafficking and illicit trade;
29. Condemns the increased incidences of kidnapping and hostage-taking in the region, which have proved highly lucrative for criminal and terrorist groups; welcomes the work of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Group on the impact of terrorist hostage-taking on human rights; calls for much greater cooperation among Sahel governments and with the governments of such key regional states as Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Sudan, as well as with the EU and other supranational bodies, to ensure effective and coordinated responses to these problems by political, security and judicial institutions;
30. Points out that terrorist operations know no borders and organisations are joining forces to pursue them; notes that the Boko Haram group is established in much of Nigeria and threatens the stability of Niger and that AQMI, led by three Algerians (Abou Zeid, Yahya Abou Al-Hammam, and Mokhtar Belmokhtar), is attempting to destabilise southern Algeria; welcomes the European Union border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya, aimed at securing Libyan borders; calls, therefore, on the Sahel countries, to coordinate their efforts to make the entire region secure, starting with the borders, and to intensify counterterrorism cooperation with all the countries concerned, including Algeria, Nigeria, Morocco, and Libya; calls on the EU, the AU, the ECOWAS, and the international community to provide the Sahel countries with every necessary form of technical, material and human support;
31. Warns against a perceived spread of extremism in the Arab Spring countries – Tunisia, Egypt and Libya – and invites the VP/HR to provide leadership in the process of cooperation with these countries' governments, institutions and civil society organisations in such a way as to support truly democratic transition processes, in order to ensure simultaneously the stabilisation of the conflict-prone neighbouring regions, namely the Sahel;
32. Calls on the Sahel countries to establish intensive cooperation with Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Ghana, which are transit ports for drugs coming from Latin American criminal groups and bound for Europe; calls on the EU to help the Sahel countries fight this trafficking;
33. Considers it crucial, therefore, to encourage the reform of institutions responsible for the judiciary, security and basic services in the Sahel countries, in order to help restore the rule of law and create better conditions for democratic transition, human rights, sustainable development and institutional legitimacy; encourages Sahel governments to continue the process of decentralisation, to transfer more power and resources to local authorities and to boost their capacity, legitimacy and accountability; stresses, in

particular, the importance of clear accountability structures for promoting efficiency and transparency, and calls on the EU to work with local authorities to strengthen mechanisms for civilian control and oversight; and to strengthen anti-corruption initiatives; draws further attention to the necessity, as stated in the new UN integrated strategy for the Sahel, of supporting the strengthening of internal and external oversight, as well as integrity safeguard mechanisms, for law enforcement officers, members of the judiciary and law court officials;

34. Points to the imperative in Mali, in particular, of ensuring adequate human and financial resourcing of the Ministry of Justice, as well as the professional training of its staff; urges the governments of the Sahel countries to respect the independence and the impartiality of the courts, since these are essential guarantees of democracy and the rule of law; calls on the Sahel countries to continue their efforts to improve judicial training; calls on the EU to support NGO projects aimed at raising human rights awareness among judicial practitioners; encourages, moreover, the Malian authorities to prosecute officials involved in corruption and organised crime, as crucial measures in restoring confidence and reducing the potential for future instability; notes that organised crime engenders corruption which permeates every sphere of the state; calls on the Sahel countries, therefore, to condemn roundly all forms of corruption;
35. Welcomes the emphasis in the new UN integrated strategy for the Sahel on the need to design and support truth-seeking processes, national consultations on transitional justice, judicial accountability mechanisms and reparation programmes, including for victims of sexual violence; calls for the EU to work with relevant UN agencies to assist Sahel governments in implementing these reforms;
36. Applauds the agreement between Senegal and the AU to establish a Special Tribunal to prosecute former Chadian President Hissène Habré for war crimes, torture and crimes against humanity, and the agreement between the governments of Senegal and Chad to allow Senegalese judges to conduct investigations in Chad; encourages strongly political leaders in the Sahel countries and all public authorities to explicate and give swift effect to their resolve to end the culture of impunity for alleged war criminals and human rights violators in Chad and elsewhere in the region; notes, in this connection, that Chad remains the only Sahel country not to have signed up to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights; encourages Chad to do so, as a strong signal of its commitment to punishing systemic abuses of human rights and providing redress to victims; regrets, moreover, Burkina Faso's recent law granting amnesty to heads of state; fears that this sends the wrong signal to violators of human rights in the region and runs counter to the spirit of tackling impunity;
37. Welcomes the peaceful settlement of the border dispute between Niger and Burkina Faso brought by those two countries before the International Court of Justice, which handed down its ruling on 16 April 2013, and calls on the Sahel countries to follow this example;
38. Calls on the Sahel countries to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC) so as to enable it to conduct investigations freely and with complete impartiality; calls on states parties to execute international arrest warrants issued by the ICC and to enforce its decisions with all due swiftness; proposes that the UN should help the Sahel countries to set up impartial and independent judicial bodies to try perpetrators of international crimes,

following the example of the Special Court for Sierra Leone; notes that Mauritania is the only Sahel country – and one of the very few African countries – not to have acceded to the Rome Statute of the ICC; encourages it to do so, as a strong signal of rejecting the culture of impunity; emphasises, in this connection, the importance of developing an EU policy on transitional justice as specified in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights;

39. Calls on all countries in the region to act swiftly to tackle the persistent reports of alleged arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment and abuses, in spite of legislation prohibiting such practices; expresses particular concern over the reports of torture in detention centres and the arbitrary arrests of thousands of migrants in Mauritania, as well as the authorities' refusal after two years to communicate the whereabouts of certain convicted prisoners to their families; expresses alarm also at reports in Chad of mass ill-treatment in detention, detention without trial, and hundreds of forced evictions in N'Djamena, in addition to the forced disappearance of prisoners; points out that forced disappearances are considered a war crime under the Rome Statute; condemns the reports of extremely poor conditions in some of the region's prisons, particularly in Chad and Mali, which lack basic healthcare and inflict great suffering on inmates; calls on the Sahel countries to improve living conditions for prisoners and, in particular, to guarantee the safety and security of the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children; draws attention, moreover, to the recent death sentences imposed by the Malian judiciary for crimes including robbery, criminal association and the illegal possession of firearms;

Civic freedoms and democratic governance

40. Stresses that the security imperative in the current Mali conflict should not detract from the primacy aim across the region of inclusive national dialogue, good governance and democratic reforms as the engine of political stability and sustainability; notes that these issues are inextricable from improvement in the spheres of development and human rights; urges all sides in Mali to be an example for the rest of the region in achieving these goals;
41. Supports the UN Security Council resolution commitment to assist the transitional authorities of Mali to implement the road map towards the full restoration of constitutional order, democratic governance and national unity, as essential building blocks of the overall peace process; considers it essential to create conditions conducive to the holding of free, fair and democratic elections, in keeping with international standards; stresses the need to overcome challenges related to the voting arrangements in the IDP and refugee camps, to avoid further political marginalisation; calls for immediate action on this issue by the Malian Government and its international partners; welcomes the agreement signed between the Malian Government and the Tuareg rebels which paves the way for the return of the Malian army and administration in the north, and which removed a major obstacle for the holding of the presidential elections in July; emphasises the need to ensure the safe participation of women in the electoral process;
42. Welcomes the use of an EU election observation mission (EOM) in the Malian elections; recalls, however, the need for the EEAS to ensure adequate follow-up to the EOM recommendations and their longer-term integration into EU policy on a broader basis; believes, in particular, that the EOM could add value to elections in the Sahel through the ability to monitor aspects of human rights and report back to EU delegations to trigger appropriate actions, if necessary;

43. Calls on the Malian Government and the international community to learn lessons from the democratic transition in Niger and its constitutional process in 2010-2011, in particular regarding the extensive consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, the efforts to promote women's political participation as candidates, and the support of civil society partners to conduct citizen election observation, voter education and activities; emphasises the importance for the whole Sahel region of continued support to Niger in order to consolidate citizens' confidence in the democratic system, and to follow up on the new constitution's requirement to increase transparency and fight corruption in extractive industries management, including by publishing all sizeable mining contracts and information on the revenues generated from them;
44. Deeply regrets restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association in the Sahel; expresses particular concern at reports in Chad of the harassment, intimidation and arrest of journalists, political opponents, trade unionists, church figures and other civil society activists and human rights defenders; expresses further concern at the arrest of and alleged violence against peaceful protesters in Mauritania, and the alleged attempts to silence opposition in Mali, including through the arrest of journalists and political opponents, and by censoring media outlets; stresses, in this connection, the importance in the Sahel of supporting human rights defenders, independent civil society, including women's organisations, and a free media as key actors in the life of a democratic society, particularly in times of elections; welcomes positive developments on the freedom of expression, assembly and association elsewhere in the region, and encourages the EU to work with local partners to continue encouraging improvements; calls, furthermore, on the EU to encourage and assist a mapping of civil society as a basis for more effective support; recommends that the EU assist civil society and human rights defenders strategically as well as financially, opening up long-term exchanges, including through the relevant EU delegations;
45. Considers that the protection and promotion of freedom of speech is essential in developing an active and engaged civil society that can properly contribute to the development of the entire region; condemns, in this connection, any attempt at censorship, intimidation of journalists or human rights activists and any type of direct or indirect pressure exerted on private or state media;
46. Calls on the Sahel countries to cease all arbitrary arrests and intimidation campaigns aimed at the press and the media, human rights defenders, or opposition activists; calls on the Sahel-Saharan countries, including the North African countries, to respect fully the freedom of expression of non-violent groups and their freedom to demonstrate; calls on the judicial authorities to try imprisoned opposition figures fairly and in accordance with the law in force; calls on the Sahel countries to promote a multiparty system and both to allow political groupings which abide by the rule of law to contest elections without fear of reprisal and to enable the people to participate in elections;

Development, humanitarian aid and human rights

47. Reiterates that human security and development in the Sahel countries are inextricably linked, as stated in the EU's 2011 Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel; stresses that a stable security situation, economic and political stability, and stability as regards respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are necessary for the long term success and sustainability of development policies in the Sahel; draws attention,

however, to the fact that bringing security to the region requires investment in development aid so that the local population has sufficient resources to boost regional stability; takes the view that this would prevent much of the trafficking and illegal activities that stem from the extreme poverty and lack of resources and prospects in the region;

48. Notes with due seriousness the extreme and pervasive poverty across the Sahel, particularly in Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, but also in Mauritania; acknowledges the detrimental impact of poverty on the prospects of realising human rights; notes that poverty and underdevelopment disproportionately impact upon women and girls, and expresses grave concern over the high maternal and under-five child mortality rates in the region; draws attention to the inverse relationship between the level of education among mothers and the infant mortality rate; points, accordingly, to the importance of promoting schooling for girls; stresses the UN's findings of lower mortality rates among better educated mothers as a rallying call for universal and accessible education; points out that fast population growth, often at annual rates of over 3 %, puts additional pressure on governments' capacity to protect even the most basic economic and social rights; considers it necessary, therefore, to provide better access to health services and – as far as sexual and reproductive rights are concerned – to family planning services in particular;
49. Emphasises the interdependence of development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security in the Sahel; reiterates its support for the human rights-based approach and democratic ownership in development co-operation, based on harnessing local participation and knowledge to achieve development goals on the ground and for strong, effective and independent follow-up enforcement mechanisms, involving parliaments, other genuinely representative bodies, and local and regional civil society both at national and international level; recalls and supports the EU commitments to implement a human rights approach to EU development co-operation, as also noted in the EU Strategy on Human Rights and its Action Plan;
50. Draws attention once again to the need to make development aid for states contingent on respect for fundamental rights; reiterates that the allocation of European development aid funding can be effective only if the Union is in a position to carry out proper scrutiny of the way in which that funding is used, in order to satisfy itself that it is not being diverted from its intended purpose; reaffirms the need, if human rights are to be safeguarded effectively, to make the EU's external and internal policies more consistent, in keeping with the EU's development aims;
51. Calls on the Commission, on the basis of the local population's previously identified needs, to release all the development funding earmarked for the Sahel: the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EDF, the Financing Instrument for Development Cooperation and the Sahel Resilience Fund;
52. Calls on the EU to support all measures being taken by Sahel countries, NGOs, and civil society to improve access to care, especially for the most vulnerable populations; calls on international organisations to continue the efforts to eradicate HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and meningitis, which cause numerous deaths; underlines the need to design and implement health programmes in order to strengthen health systems, taking into account the fact that the global economic crisis has undermined progress on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases; points out that some Sahel populations are

nomadic and cannot easily gain access to care; calls, in this connection, for support to be given to care-related awareness and training campaigns;

53. Condemns the fact that budget cuts in areas such as food security, health and education, which are of key importance in achieving the Millennium Goals, continue to exacerbate food and humanitarian crises in the Sahel; emphasises the fundamental need for structural action in the fields of agriculture, food security and nutrition, as well as specific measures to eradicate land-grabbing, in order to promote inclusive and sustainable growth and to prevent the annual recurrence of food crises in the Sahel region;
54. Takes the view that political instability in the Sahel region, combined with the severe drought affecting millions of people, constitutes a serious threat to democracy, the rule of law and human and socio-economic rights, and in turn is having an adverse impact on people's living standards; points out that the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights are essential for guaranteeing national stability, security, and respect for fundamental freedoms;
55. Calls on local and regional authorities, in cooperation with civil society, to enhance security and respect for human rights in the Sahel countries and at their borders in an effort to ensure that development and humanitarian aid policies can be implemented as effectively as possible;
56. Calls on the governments of the Sahel countries to address the root causes of the crisis on the basis of a sustainable economic development strategy that takes account of their citizens' political, economic and social concerns, such as access to food, education, health care, employment and housing, wealth redistribution and decent living conditions;
57. Emphasises the necessity of combating corruption to enhance institutional legitimacy and tackle the mounting development and human rights challenges in the region; notes that access to basic health care and education has been gravely hampered by various forms of corruption; stresses, furthermore, the importance of a free, organised civil society and media so as to monitor and report abuses;
58. Notes that women have an essential role to play in the development of the Sahel region, particularly in terms of nutrition, food security and food production, as they are the ones principally engaged in agriculture, although they still have almost no access to ownership of the land they cultivate; calls on the Commission to recognise the fundamental role of women, as smallholder farmers, in food security, and to invest in programmes which specifically support them; insists that the EU strategy should also focus on actions intended to ensure that the most vulnerable people, especially in rural areas, are able to benefit from agricultural training opportunities, education on nutrition, good health and working conditions, and a safety net in times of need; emphasises that in order for smallholder farmers, in particular women farmers, to be able not only to farm sustainably but also to develop their productive capacity, they need to have increased access to microcredit loans so that they can invest in better seeds, fertilisers and irrigation methods, and obtain the tools they need to protect their crops from pests and disease;
59. Highlights the urgent need to grant EU humanitarian aid to help achieve the Millennium Goals; underlines the importance of the goal of improving maternal health in order to reduce maternal mortality and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and family planning; stresses the importance of education and awareness-raising in the

area of sexual and reproductive health as an integral part of the women's health agenda;

60. Notes that there are alarming signs that the Sahel region will be hit by a severe food and nutrition crisis this year, and calls on the Commission to provide adequate humanitarian aid funding for the region;
61. Emphasise the pressing issues of famines, droughts, persistent hunger, and the inability of the national government to provide for basic food security, which are driving forces for local disillusionment; reaffirms the need to improve the national government's ability to provide for food security through increased funding and political support for the AGIR-Sahel initiative also as a regional and Comprehensive Approach to tackle the root cause of food security;
62. Calls on the EU, in cooperation with the Sahel countries, to implement priority development policies, based on an approach rooted in human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to alleviate the food crisis and the problems of malnutrition and famine and tackle problems caused by drought and natural disasters; calls on the Commission, in keeping with those priority policies, to make optimum use of the funds earmarked for combating malnutrition (EUR 123.5 million in 2012) in order to meet the needs of the people concerned and support local capacity building in the countries in question in an effort to ensure that the aid has a positive impact;
63. Points out that a long-term commitment is necessary in order to increase resistance to drought in the Sahel and thus prevent recurring food crises and obviate the need for large scale humanitarian assistance whenever there is a drought; stresses that a commitment of this kind needs to be underpinned by a sustainable partnership between governments, regional institutions, donors and financial institutions, along the lines of the 'AGIR Sahel' initiative launched by the European Union;
64. Notes, with particular concern, that access to drinking water still represents a problem throughout the Sahel region; reiterates that in order to achieve the development of the region, the main focus should be placed on ensuring the basic needs of the population of this area; underlines that an important part of the development aid provided by the EU must address this issue; welcomes, in this connection, all international initiatives which aim at reducing water scarcity in the Sahel region;
65. Stresses that a long-term approach based on universal access to education is necessary in order to improve the everyday lives of the Sahel's inhabitants and support the development of what will be a region with 150 million people in 2040;
66. Encourages the Sahel states and regional actors, in conjunction with the UN, to mobilise new resources for development; welcomes the consultations started by the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel with the African Development Bank, and recommends that these consultations be extended to the World Bank and other international financial institutions, in order to create a Sahel Action Fund; applauds this proposed fund's integrated platform for resources, co-ordinating regional development projects with the specific needs of Sahel countries; encourages the EU to adapt and co-ordinate its own strategy accordingly;
67. Expresses concern about the general situation of uranium mining in the Sahel, particularly in the light of the attack by MUJAO on a mine in Arlit in northern Niger on 23 May 2013;

stresses that major breaches of security around Niger's uranium mines could prove disastrous for local populations and regional stability, and calls, therefore, for security to be given the utmost attention by the Nigerien authorities and their international partners; highlights, moreover, the importance of guaranteeing safety in uranium mining; calls, furthermore, on mining companies to ensure that uranium is mined responsibly, with the full consent of local communities and with minimal detrimental impact to nearby populations and their environment;

68. Notes, with due gravity, the frequent food and nutrition crises and other humanitarian emergencies in the Sahel region, and their effect on the most fundamental human rights; welcomes the strong involvement of the EU and its Member States in the humanitarian crisis efforts in the Sahel; underlines that tackling food insecurity is key both to facilitating peace and enhancing human rights; believes that, to this end, local production and ownership should be stimulated, as well as distribution networks and resource mobility, enhanced; notes that in 2012 the Commission provided aid totalling EUR 338 million, including EUR 174 million in emergency humanitarian aid, to address food crises and that DG ECHO made EUR 172 million in humanitarian aid available, EUR 58 million of which was used in Mali;
69. Calls on the Union to continue and step up its efforts to boost humanitarian aid for the Sahel, ensure that there is close cooperation between international humanitarian aid agencies, civil society, local and regional authorities and governments, and to mobilise the funding earmarked under the 10th EDF (EUR 660 million for the period 2007-2013) and the Fund for the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR Sahel - EUR 172 million for 2012); welcomes the budget of EUR 1.5 million granted to AGIR-Sahel under the 11th EDF with the aim of increasing the resilience of the Sahel States;
70. Stresses the need for all the Sahel countries to implement policies on the establishment of basic social infrastructure and networks (sanitation, network of medical advisers, transport, telecommunications) which ensure that humanitarian aid can be channelled in a neutral, universal, unrestricted, proper and efficient way; looks to those countries and local and regional authorities to ensure that the networks remain operational and accessible;

Human rights situation of women, children and minorities

71. Condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing slavery, often by inheritance, in the Sahel region, and particular in Mauritania, where it reportedly affects a sizeable minority of the population; notes that slavery exists within a rigid caste system, and persists despite the country's official abolition of slavery in 1981, and its explicit criminalisation in 2007; expresses deep concern at the institutionalised nature of this practice, which reaches as far as the civil service; notes, furthermore, the Mauritanian Government's extreme reluctance to acknowledge the continued widespread existence of slavery, and that to date only one legal case against a slave owner is known to have seen successful prosecution; urges the Mauritanian Government to live up to its national and international legal commitments and obligations to end effectively all forms of slavery and to enact anti-slavery laws providing, inter-alia, compensation procedures; urges, moreover, the Mauritanian authorities to stop harassing and even imprisoning civil society activists who campaign for an end to slavery, including on charges of apostasy; calls on the Commission and the Member States, in this connection, to continue to support the work of Mauritanian as well

as international anti-slavery organisations, including the UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on contemporary forms of slavery and the International Labour Organization;

72. Notes with great concern that slavery persists across the wider Sahel region, with large numbers of people in bonded labour in Mali, Niger and elsewhere; urges the responsible national and international authorities to take action in this regard, by monitoring the implementation of existing legislation prohibiting and criminalising slavery, with particular attention to the position and vulnerability of women and girls; encourages the development by the authorities of programmes that aim at, inter alia, assisting in the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, collecting data, and organising awareness-raising campaigns, as slavery is considered by many as a natural state, and the social hierarchy is culturally entrenched; encourages the local authorities to develop strategies and programmes aiming to integrate former slaves into society by ensuring means of subsistence and adequate access to work;
73. Expresses concern at the violation of fundamental children's rights in the Sahel, in particular, gender-based violence and discrimination, prevalent child labour, the alleged detention of minors in adult jails in Mauritania, Mali and elsewhere, and Chad's recruitment of child soldiers into its regular army; calls for the EU to work closely with Sahel governments to ensure the eradication of these practices;
74. Expresses deep concern about evidence of child labour in Malian gold mines, agriculture, forestry and other sectors of the economy, reportedly involving children as young as six years old; notes the laws in force in the Sahel states prohibiting child labour; notes also the particularly hazardous nature of gold mining; calls, therefore, on the Malian authorities to implement the policy proposals in its Action Plan for the Fight against Child Labour (PANETEM) of June 2011, and to promote universal education more actively; calls on the EU to work with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other national and international organisations, to eradicate fully child labour in Mali; calls on all the Sahel states to combat child labour and promote education;
75. Notes, with great concern, that according to NGO statistics, over three million children under the age of 17 are working in Mali; deplores this situation, especially given that this results in reduced education rates and low literacy rates;
76. Points out that the EU endorses the principles underpinning the Kimberley Process, implements the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan programmes and endeavours wherever possible to encourage compliance with basic international standards in the areas of social protection, employment and the environment, and corporate social responsibility (CSR); calls on the EU and the Sahel states to consider introducing a gold traceability process along the lines of the Kimberley Process for diamonds; emphasises the need for European companies which have subsidiaries in the countries of the region to satisfy themselves that these basic standards and international guidelines on CSR are being complied with; points out that the EU will shortly introduce the principle of country-by-country reporting;
77. Is greatly concerned about reports of child abduction for ransom and sale in Chad, as well as in other countries in the region; notes that children are trafficked internally and abroad for forced labour, forced marriage and sexual exploitation; notes, furthermore, that in some cases children have been abducted and sold to international adoption agencies;

78. Calls on the Sahel states to promote access to education for all children, both boys and girls, and for nomad peoples, with no discrimination on the grounds of race, caste or ethnicity; calls on the Sahel states to promote policies on vocational training and access to higher education and employment, in order to offer young people in the Sahel a future and therefore keep them out of the clutches of terrorist groups; emphasises that conditions for children in schools must meet minimum criteria as regards health, safety and dignity and that steps must be taken to ensure that children are not mistreated or forced to engage in begging by their tutors;
79. Calls for effective health and education policies targeting the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children, to be implemented and monitored in order to make progress towards achieving the MDGs: universal primary education, improved maternal health, universal access to health care, and efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and all infectious diseases; calls on the EU, under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), to make youth a priority action area in the Sahel and to develop an ambitious education policy; reiterates the importance of policies focusing specifically on women and access to employment;
80. Acknowledges the important role which women play in stabilising and developing the Sahel, and calls for their leadership role in conflict prevention, peace-keeping and peace-building processes, security, politics and economic development to be strengthened; encourages development partners to allocate financial support to projects which seek specifically to empower women in the region;
81. Expresses concern at the discrimination faced by women and girls in much of this region, the manifestations of which include forced marriage, child marriage, sexual exploitation, under-education and widespread female genital mutilation, including infibulation, and traditional practices such as sororate or levirate marriage, as well as regarding access to education, jobs with rights, and health; calls for the implementation, in cooperation with all of the development actors on the ground, of policies to safeguard human rights and gender equality, in particular respect for and the safeguarding and promotion of the rights of women, including sexual and reproductive rights, with no discrimination on the grounds of race, caste, age, ethnicity, religious belief, marital status, origin or status as a migrant or non-migrant; underlines that more efforts are necessary in order to guarantee that reforms related to governance and the rule of law respond to the specific needs of women;
82. Calls on the Sahel countries to adopt laws and concrete measures prohibiting and establishing penalties for all forms of violence against women, including domestic and sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages, especially in the case of underage girls; highlights the importance of protecting the victims and providing specifically targeted services, while combating the impunity of attackers and ensuring that these crimes are investigated, tried and properly punished, as well as making justice fully available to all women, without any form of discrimination on religious and/or ethnic grounds; stresses that domestic violence is not a private family matter, and nor are excuses for violence which are entrenched in cultural or religious belief acceptable;
83. Urges the Sahel countries to revise their laws regarding women and property rights; stresses the importance of women's ownership over the land they farm and live on;

84. Urges the international community to dedicate more funds to advancing women's rights and empowerment in the region; welcomes the efforts of the African Union in respect of women's rights and recalls the importance of the ECOWAS for stability in the region; calls on the Sahel countries to step up their cooperation with a view to launching awareness campaigns on women's rights with NGOs, civil society, the UN and the EU; calls on the EU to work with regional actors to promote the education of girls and to support measures boosting the financial security and potential of women, as key to securing female social, political and economic empowerment; encourages, furthermore, a policy emphasis on improving women's healthcare;
85. Calls, furthermore, on the Sahel countries to ensure that all girls are registered at birth and subsequently enrolled in primary school education;
86. Calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Council to encourage more countries in the region to make explicit statutory provisions for women's and girls' rights and to prioritise programmes that would secure those rights, in particular access to public services, including in the field of education, access to health, sexual and reproductive rights, and to secure loans for food, land and productive resources, especially in rural areas, as well as access to health care and the justice system, in order to enhance women's financial independence by helping them make the transition from informal to formal work, their participation in political and economic decision-making, and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including the eradication of early forced marriage and the barbaric practice of female genital mutilation;
87. Calls on the EUSR for the Sahel and the EUSR for Human Rights, respectively, to develop joint actions to secure women's rights in the region more effectively, by tackling impunity in connection with gender-based violence and all other forms of violence which are an affront to the dignity of women; urges the Commission, the EEAS and partner states to make women's rights and gender equality a priority for bilateral aid programmes and to provide sustainable and reliable funding for initiatives aimed at empowering women and boosting gender equality; particularly condemns violence as the principal obstacle to women's enjoyment of social and economic freedom; emphasises that the promotion of equality between men and women should be seen as a cross-cutting issue;
88. Welcomes the legal status of same-sex relationships in Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso; regrets, however, the societal discrimination still present; expresses its grave concern over the use of 'public indecency' laws and laws prohibiting association for 'an immoral purpose' when dealing with the LGBT community in Mali and the wider region; hopes that those oppressed during the insurgency in northern Mali may safely re-integrate into their society; expresses deep concern over the continuing criminalisation of LGBT relationships in Mauritania which, for men, nominally carry the punishment of death by public stoning; notes, however, that there are no documented incidences of this punishment ever having been applied; urges the Mauritanian Government, nevertheless, to work with civil society to reform its legislation and help to improve the lives of LGBT citizens;
89. Believes that a rights-based approach to the situation and development of the Tuareg people, which honestly addresses historic grievances, while bearing in mind the fact that the Tuareg people live in areas with other ethnic groups as well, is essential for peace and development in the Sahel region; welcomes developments in Niger on this issue, but

urges all countries with significant Tuareg populations, including non-Sahel countries such as Algeria and Libya, , to work with community representatives to resolve, politically and institutionally, the problems of underdevelopment and animosity; notes, furthermore, the variety of cultures across the Sahel; takes the view that all these peoples should once again be given the chance to live peacefully side by side; encourages the governments of the region to include all of them in social and political dialogues, and in the processes of decision-making;

EU Policy recommendations for the Sahel

90. Welcomes the appointment of the EUSR for the Sahel, and the strong human rights element in his mandate; expects the new EUSR to cooperate closely with the EUSR for Human Rights, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the human rights defenders and observers in the region; in promoting respect for human rights and international humanitarian law; calls for appropriate coordination between the EUSR for the Sahel with the EUSR for the Southern Mediterranean in particular, and with the EUSR for the Horn of Africa as well, given that crises in Africa bear strong regional implications, and they tend to have a spill-over effect and bear geostrategic considerations; urges the EU, in this connection, to invest itself in effectively coordinating all EU endeavours in Africa, especially crisis management and post-conflict efforts and, calls, therefore, on the VP/HR to ensure such coordination;
91. Stresses the importance of implementing the EU's human rights policy commitments, including its guidelines on children and armed conflict, on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them, on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law, on the protection of civilians in CSDP missions and operations, as well as the EU comprehensive approach policy regarding implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security, including by monitoring and reporting on developments in this regard;
92. Deplores the fact that neither the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, adopted on 21 March 2011, nor the conclusions thereon adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council of 23 March 2012 contain any reference to the promotion of gender equality, the situation of women or the defence of women's rights;
93. Welcomes the strategic lines of action in the EU Sahel Strategy, including support for and promotion of good governance and internal conflict resolution; believes, however, that the strategy still does not adequately mainstream human rights, the rule of law, support for democracy, effective economic governance and strong anti-corruption measures as key elements to support the development-security nexus at its heart; urges the EU institutions to work together in the near future to revise the strategy, by including concrete proposals for:
 - (a) addressing the plight of refugees and IDPs throughout the region,
 - (b) tackling the scourge of slavery, human trafficking and other forms of trafficking and smuggling, which have proved so detrimental to human rights and security in the region,
 - (c) improving the situation of women, children and minorities,

- (d) channelling aid in an effective and efficient manner, offering added support to governments on the ‘more for more’ principle,
 - (e) ending the culture of impunity, including by supporting measures already being proposed or put in place in Mali and elsewhere,
 - (f) protecting civic freedoms and improving democratic governance through inclusive electoral processes and credible representation, and by supporting civil society,
 - (g) protecting cultural diversity and heritage;
94. Recommends that the EU consider the possibility of targeted sanctions, through asset freezes, visa bans or other instruments, of the most serious violators of human rights, both in Mali and elsewhere in the region;
95. Welcomes the UN Secretary-General’s recent report on the situation in the Sahel; notes the ‘four-by-four’ approach, aiming to bolster governance, security, humanitarian requirements and development, as part of an integrated strategy; welcomes in particular the strong human rights dimension in the strategy, and calls on the EU to continue its support; commends, furthermore, the emphasis of the UN integrated strategy on building participation, supporting local and regional governance, strengthening social and security cohesion, developing early-warning systems for future threats and, in particular, strengthening or consolidating national and regional human rights mechanisms; encourages the EU to incorporate a similar holistic approach to sustainability, security, humanitarian and development concerns, and human rights, in coordination and in harmony with the UN, in a way which recognises the fundamentally transnational, cross-border and intertwined nature of the Sahel’s challenges;
96. Emphasises the continuing crucial importance of increased EU engagement with African regional actors such as the AU, ECOWAS, the Arab Maghreb Union, and the African regional human rights instruments in generating sustained progress in the human rights and democracy initiatives in the Sahel; urges neighbouring countries such as Senegal, Algeria and Morocco to contribute leadership and help to create a genuine regional dynamic which will boost regional economic development and human rights; recognises ultimately that the lasting solutions to the Sahel’s problems must come from within that region and be fully owned by its own people; calls, nevertheless, on the EU to continue its commitment to working with and assisting Sahel partners with all appropriate means at its disposal to improve the quality of life of the people in that region and to strengthen ties with their democratic governments;

Human rights considerations in Western Sahara and the Tindouf camps

97. Welcomes and echoes the April 2013 report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, which stresses ‘the critical importance of addressing the Western Sahara conflict as part of a broader strategy for the Sahel’, and the fact that ‘the issue of human rights remains important for any resolution of the conflict’; notes that the ongoing conflicts in the Sahel, in particular the presence of terrorist groups, such as AQIM in northern Mali and southern Algeria, are factors which risk destabilising Western Sahara, as well as the wider region; notes, furthermore, the negative impact of the conflict on regional integration, which should involve Morocco and Algeria, and which could offer significant opportunities for democratisation and economic development, enhancing

human security throughout the Sahel and Sahara;

98. Reaffirms its support for the UN resolutions on Western Sahara; calls for full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Sahrawi people, including freedom of association, freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate peacefully;
99. Emphasises the need for human rights in Western Sahara and in the Tindouf camps to be addressed, even without anticipating any final political settlement or expressing a view on such a settlement; reiterates, nevertheless, that self-determination is a fundamental human right, as specified by Article 1 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and that territorial integrity is a principle enshrined in international law; recalls, moreover, UN Security Council Resolution 1754(2007), urging the parties to enter into negotiations in good faith, without preconditions, 'with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara; echoes this call to Morocco and the Polisario Front to continue negotiations for a peaceful solution to the conflict, reaffirming the rights of the Sahrawi people to self-determination; stresses the opportunity deriving from the political and democratic reforms undertaken in Morocco, while taking note of the stronger obligations necessitated by these reforms to respect and uphold human rights in Western Sahara in particular; fears that the 25-year delay in arranging a referendum, or reaching any other form of mutually acceptable negotiated political settlement, is increasing Sahrawi alienation and the potential for violence, particularly amongst the young; calls on the EU to become more closely involved and to support the United Nations in its efforts to encourage the parties to resume direct negotiations with a view to securing a peaceful and lasting resolution of the conflict;
100. Calls on the Commission and Member States – considering that the political solution to the Western Sahara conflict, reconciliation and the human rights situation are closely linked – to be more active in the resolution of the Western Sahara conflict, not only supporting the UN negotiations but also using its various external policy instruments (for example strengthening human rights monitoring and awareness among police and security forces, supporting democratic reforms, including decentralisation, fighting discrimination in the region) to promote much needed confidence building between the conflict parties;
101. Expresses deep concern at the recent report from the UNSR on Torture, who found evidence that Moroccan officials have detained individuals on political grounds, subjected Sahrawi inmates to torture and rape, kidnapped and abandoned protesters in the desert in order to intimidate them, and deliberately and frequently targeted pro-independence advocates, including in their homes; notes further widespread allegations of forced disappearances and unfair trials; draws particular attention to the dismantling of the Gdeim Izik protest camp in November 2010, where significant violence claimed thirteen lives, and the subsequent trial of 25 Sahrawis, many of whom were known human rights activists, in February 2013; notes Morocco's insistence regarding the trial's fairness and due process, and the positive conclusions of some international observers, but also recalls the UNSR's concern at the use of a military court, the allegations of torture and the failure on the part of the Moroccan authorities to investigate these allegations; notes the conclusions by some NGOs and human rights observers relating to the case's alleged politicised prosecutions, deficient evidence and excessive sentences, with twenty individuals having been sentenced to between twenty years and life imprisonment; welcomes, therefore, the Moroccan Government's endorsement of the National Council

for Human Rights' (CNDH) recommendation that civilians should not be tried by military tribunals in the future; urges the Moroccan Government to guarantee that this becomes a reality; regrets, at the same time, that this decision will not affect those already convicted; urges, moreover, the Moroccan Government to implement all of the recommendations made in UN and CNDH reports, and to continue developing a human rights culture; calls, in this connection, on the Moroccan authorities to release immediately all Sahrawi political prisoners, to work with civil society and other actors to guarantee the transparency and fairness of its judicial processes, and to investigate and prosecute security officials alleged to have been involved in arbitrary detentions, torture and other abuses of power;

102. Condemns the human rights abuses, principally involving harassment and sexual violence, inflicted on Sahrawi women;
103. Reiterates the concerns of the unofficially leaked 2006 OHCHR report, about restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly and association in Western Sahara; notes Morocco's claim to allow sit-in demonstrations and other forms of protest; regrets Morocco's apparent institutional obstruction of NGOs advocating a pro-independence position by preventing their legal registration and recognition, which is necessary to advocate effectively in their communities; condemns the often severe punishments for 'undermining Moroccan territorial integrity', an item of legislation reportedly used to target Sahrawis peacefully advocating independence; recalls the findings of the UN Independent Expert on cultural rights that the Moroccan authorities suppress certain aspects of Sahrawi culture; repeats the UN Independent Expert's call to overturn such measures and to promote full cultural diversity; notes positively, in this connection, the provisions on respect for cultural rights that have been included in the new Moroccan constitution; welcomes the setting-up of a dedicated Sahrawi television station; encourages strongly the full implementation of these provisions;
104. Regrets deeply the fact that on Wednesday, 6 March 2013 Morocco expelled a delegation of four Members of the European Parliament; notes that the aim of the delegation was to visit the territories of Western Sahara, to inquire about the situation of human rights and to meet with representatives of the MINURSO; regrets deeply the behaviour of the Moroccan authorities and demands that the Kingdom of Morocco permit free access and free movement in Western Sahara to independent observers, members of parliaments, to the press and to humanitarian organisations;
105. Recalls the concerns of the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) that Western Sahara remains one of the world's most-mined areas; notes that landmines in Western Sahara have tragically caused at least 2 500 casualties since 1975, continuing to threaten many thousands of Sahrawi nomads, and representing a major obstacle to the resolution of the Western Saharan dispute and refugee situation; commends, therefore, the work of MINURSO, the Royal Moroccan Army, the Polisario Front, Landmine Action, and others to map and clear affected areas; welcomes the fact that the Polisario Front has signed the Geneva Call on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines; encourages all actors to do everything possible to educate the population, assist victims and remove all remaining munitions; notes, furthermore, that Morocco is one of the few countries – and one of only three African countries – not to have signed up to the Mine Ban Treaty; encourages it to do so as a confidence-building measure and a sign of commitment to peace;

106. Highlights the case of Sahrawi women and their important role in Sahrawi society, particularly in the refugee camps, where illiteracy has decreased sharply; emphasises the crucial role of women in organising Sahrawi institutions and their high level of participation in decision-making at all levels, from local committees to parliament and government; draws attention to the role played by the women of Western Sahara in peace-keeping, in promoting dialogue and conflict resolution, and in maintaining Sahrawi society and structures;
107. Expresses concern about the poverty and lack of basic services in the Polisario Front-administered refugee camps near Tindouf, particularly with regard to nutrition, healthcare and access to potable water; welcomes the humanitarian assistance provided by the EU through ECHO to the refugees concerned; calls, nevertheless, for international actors to channel, co-ordinate and consolidate aid more effectively and, where appropriate, to increase the amount of aid in order to guarantee the stability of the humanitarian situation and help improve the conditions in the camps; echoes the recommendations of the UNSR on adequate housing that sufficient international funding be directed at the provision of housing; notes, nevertheless, the functioning systems of governance in the camps and welcomes the active presence of civil society, with the strong participation of women within both; welcomes, furthermore, the social emphasis on education, in spite of scarce resources; notes, however, the lack of clear documentation about the precise number of inhabitants in the camps; calls upon the Polisario authorities, with the assistance of Algeria where appropriate, to conduct or facilitate regular censuses or formal registrations;
108. Expresses concern that the poverty in the Tindouf camps, coupled with the absence of long-term prospects for many refugees, leaves them vulnerable to radicalisation along religious fundamentalist lines; points to the danger of young people being recruited by criminal or terrorist organisations and draws attention to the region's porous borders, which risk facilitating deeper infiltration of the camps by jihadi groups from northern Mali and elsewhere; condemns the kidnapping of three European aid workers from the Rabouni camp in October 2011; stresses, therefore, the paramount importance of ensuring the safety and security of the camps; calls on the Algerian authorities to act upon its responsibility to alleviate the human rights situation in Tindouf camps; expresses full support for the UNHCR programme aimed at fostering confidence-building by facilitating family exchanges between Tindouf and Western Sahara;
109. Notes that while most international observers and reports from the OHCHR, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch, have identified little evidence of systemic and institutional human rights violations in the camps, multiple actors, including the Moroccan Government, Moroccan NGOs and some former inhabitants of the Tindouf camps, have alleged that the Polisario authorities restrict inhabitants' freedom of expression and freedom of movement; notes Polisario's vigorous denials of these accusations and its willingness to cooperate with UN human rights agencies; calls, therefore, on Polisario to allow independent human rights observers full, regular and unfettered access to the camps, and for any allegations to be rigorously investigated;
110. Welcomes efforts to improve the documentation of alleged human rights abuses in Western Sahara, in particular through the institution of the CNDH, with offices in Laayoune and Dakhla, as recognised by the UN; notes the positive work of the CNDH

and calls on the Moroccan Government to help strengthen its independence and remit, and to ensure the implementation of its recommendations; encourages, moreover, the CNDH to increase its efforts to build relationships with those Sahrawis who are hostile to Moroccan rule and to guarantee adequate follow-up to complaints; welcomes Morocco's adoption in 2012 of three of the five UN Human Rights Council recommendations on the human rights situation in Western Sahara, and calls on it to adopt the remaining two; welcomes, furthermore, Moroccan invitations to ad-hoc international delegations, including the UNSR on torture, and the fact that those invitations were accepted; urges the Moroccan authorities to give authorisation for fact-finding missions to be conducted by other international organisations, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the European Parliament; urges all relevant parties to continue such engagement with UN human rights bodies; supports the creation of an official MINURSO-ICRC mission in the area of Fadret Leguiaa in order to proceed with the exhumation and the restitution of remains to families, following the discovery of common graves by the investigation team of the University of the Basque Country;

111. Notes, nevertheless, the serious and contested allegations against both the Moroccan and Polisario administrations; recalls also the UN Secretary-General's recent emphasis on 'independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained monitoring of the human rights situation in both Western Sahara and the camps'; notes, in this connection, that the UN did not upgrade the mandate of MINURSO in April 2013 to incorporate a human rights dimension; encourages the UN to do so, or else to establish a new, permanent, impartial human rights body for the purpose of supervising and reporting on the overall situation of human rights, and investigating individual complaints; calls on such a body to encompass the Moroccan-controlled section of Western Sahara, the Tindouf camps, and other territory controlled by the Polisario Front;
112. Encourages the governments of Morocco and Algeria to develop and enhance their political dialogue to improve regional dynamics and avoid increasing tensions, and for the benefit of the wider international community;
113. Urges the VP/HR and the EUSR for Human Rights to offer the Moroccan authorities and the Polisario administration human rights training programmes in Western Sahara and in Tindouf, which would target police and other security agents, the judiciary, local administration officers, media and civil society organisations, building on the political reforms towards democracy, the rule of law and human rights initiated by Morocco, and without prejudice to a negotiated political settlement on the Western Sahara conflict but aiming at encouraging such a negotiation;

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114. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EUSR for Human Rights and the EUSR for the Sahel, the EU Member States, the governments and parliaments of the Sahel countries, Morocco, Algeria, and the Polisario Front, the UN Secretary-General and Security Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the AU Chair and Secretary-General of the Commission, and the ECOWAS Chair and President of the Commission;