Situation in Mali

European Parliament resolution of 20 April 2012 on the situation in Mali (2012/2603(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, adopted in March 2011,

– having regard to the UN Security Council statements on Mali of 22 March¹, 26 March², 4 April³ and 9 April⁴ 2012,

– having regard to the statements by the Vice-President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy of 22 March, 26 March and 7 April 2012 regarding the situation in Mali,

– having regard to the Framework Agreement signed on 6 April 2012 between the military junta and ECOWAS,

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 22 and 23 March 2012 on the Sahel region,

– having regard to the Algiers Agreements of 2006 on development and peace in northern Mali,

– having regard to the statement made on 12 April 2012 by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay⁵,

– having regard to the statement by the Commission’s humanitarian aid department on preventing a humanitarian crisis in Mali,

– having regard to the call by the various UN agencies – UNICEF, UNHCR and the WHO – of 10 April 2012 for additional funding for the millions of people affected by food insecurity in the Sahel region,

– having regard to UNICEF’s appeal for USD 26 million for Mali to enable it to meet the health and nutritional needs of children until the end of the year,

– having regard to the call by the United Nations Refugee Agency of 23 February 2012 for USD 35,6 million to tackle the growing humanitarian crisis in Mali,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on West Africa,

¹ SC/10590.
² SC/10592.
³ SC/10600.
⁴ SC/10603.
⁵ http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e9bd7382.html
– having regard to Rule 110(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas during the night of 21-22 March 2012 the President of Mali, Amadou Toumani Touré, was overthrown in a coup which put an end to a long democratic process which had begun more than two decades previously;

B. whereas in the days following the coup international pressure and mediation efforts, especially on the part of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led to the conclusion of a framework agreement on 6 April 2012 between the Comité national pour le redressement et la démocratie (CNRDE) and ECOWAS, enabling Dioncounda Traore to be installed as interim president and instructed to organise national elections within 40 days;

C. whereas, in accordance with the 1992 Constitution, the President of the National Assembly has been appointed Interim President;

D. having regard to the wave of arrests on 16 and 17 April 2012, without any judicial procedure being followed, of political leaders, including two candidates in the presidential elections, and of senior military officers who are being held prisoner in the military camp of those responsible for the coup;

E. whereas the country is also dealing with renewed fighting in the north between government forces and rebels, which has displaced more than 200 000 people since January; whereas the estimated number of internally displaced persons exceeds 100 000, and whereas around 136 000 refugees have fled to neighbouring countries (Algeria, Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso), where the severe drought has already caused significant food shortages in recent years;

F. whereas Tuareg rebels, belonging mainly to the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), swept through northern Mali after the military coup, pushed government forces out of the three northern regions of Mali (Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu) and unilaterally proclaimed the independence of the new ‘Azawad’ state on 6 April 2012;

G. whereas an Islamist group called Ansar Dine, which has close links with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (ACMI), claims to have control of Timbuktu and is seeking to impose Sharia law in Mali;

H. whereas the proliferation of arms emanating from Libya, drug trafficking, high unemployment and poverty are contributing to the destabilisation of the region as a whole;

I. whereas avowed links exist between terrorist groups in the Sahel and Sahara region and traffickers in drugs, arms, cigarettes and human beings, particularly involving the taking of hostages for ransom;

J. whereas various other extremist movements also exist in northern Mali, such as AQMI (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Boko Haram, based in Nigeria;

K. whereas there were several uprisings of Tuaregs in Mali, in 1963, 1990 and 2006, in an attempt to secure an improvement in their living conditions, and whereas certain unfulfilled promises made to the Tuaregs, particularly at the time of the ‘National Pact’ of 1992, have
helped to create a sense of frustration;

L. whereas the enormous size and sparse population of Mali’s territory and its long, ill-defined borders necessitate good regional coordination of information and action;

M. whereas the EU has a vital interest in the security, stability and development of the whole Sahel region, particularly at a time of serious food shortages which are affecting millions of people there; whereas the recent violence will further exacerbate the food emergency both in northern Mali and in neighbouring countries, where refugees are moving into areas suffering from acute food insecurity; whereas there is an EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel; whereas the Sahel is facing its worst humanitarian crisis in the past 20 years;

N. whereas terrorism in the Sahel needs to be fought partly by means of an active policy to promote development, social justice, the rule of law and integration; whereas it is necessary to hold out to local population groups economic prospects which provide an alternative to the criminal economy;

O. whereas on 16 April 2012 the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, expressed her grave concern over reports of recruitment of child soldiers;

P. whereas there are reports of serious violations of the human rights of the population of Mali, especially in rebel-held northern areas;

Q. whereas many Malians are trapped in the northern regions and have limited access to food and other basic necessities, while aid operations remain largely suspended on account of the lack of security and the fact that in many cases aid agencies have had their equipment, vehicles and supplies stolen;

R. whereas displaced persons are living in conditions of extreme poverty such that their basic human needs are not being met and social tensions are increasing; whereas more than 50% of those displaced are women deprived of any form of protection, who constitute a particularly vulnerable group;

S. whereas, because of the looting of their facilities and stores, most humanitarian organisations have left the northern region;

T. whereas the EU has released an additional EUR 9 million in financial aid for the 1.4 million Malians estimated to be in need of food aid;

U. whereas between 175 000 and 220 000 children will suffer from serious malnutrition this year and whereas access to northern Mali and to the areas where refugees are living beyond the borders is increasingly problematic;

1. Condemns the military coup in Mali and the suspension of its republican institutions;

2. Welcomes the signing of the framework agreement providing for a series of steps aimed at restoring constitutional order; urges all the Malian stakeholders concerned to implement this agreement immediately;

3. Commends the actions taken by ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and
neighbouring countries with a view to facilitating Mali’s rapid return to constitutional order and initiating concrete measures designed to protect its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity; takes note of the outcome of the conference held in Ouagadougou on 14 and 15 April 2012 under the auspices of Burkinabe President Blaise Compaoré, the mediator appointed by ECOWAS, and hopes that the timetable and detailed arrangements for the transition will swiftly be clarified further;

4. Reaffirms the need to uphold and respect the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Mali; calls on the Malian authorities and the Tuareg liberation movement to reach a peaceful and lasting solution through constructive dialogue;

5. Calls on all parties to maintain restraint with a view to restoring the authority of the elected representatives and to cooperate to ensure the early holding of elections under international supervision, together with a quick return to democracy;

6. Takes the view that there is no military solution to the conflict in the north and that a solution must be found by means of negotiation;

7. Calls on the EU and its Member States actively to support the next steps in the transition process, including by sending an election observation mission to monitor the elections; urges the Vice-President/High Representative to speed up the implementation of the various components of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel;

8. Calls for the immediate release of the people being arbitrarily detained by the military personnel responsible for the coup;

9. Calls for the immediate release of all abductees and the immediate cessation of all violence, and renews its call for all parties in Mali to seek a peaceful solution through appropriate political dialogue;

10. Expresses deep concern at the increased terrorist threat in the north of Mali owing to the presence among the rebels of members of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and of extremist elements; condemns, in this regard, all violence and looting, including against humanitarian workers, and the abduction in Gao of Algerian diplomatic personnel;

11. Condemns the acts of violence perpetrated by armed groups;

12. Condemns in particular the atrocities committed against the civilian population, which have been directed against women more than other victims, and particularly condemns the use of abduction and rape as weapons of war; calls for an inquiry into the atrocities committed in Mali in recent months;

13. Calls on the EU and its Member States to pay particular attention to the situation of women and girls in the Sahel region and to take all the necessary measures to ensure their protection from every type of violence and from violations of their human rights;

14. Calls on the Malian authorities to combat all Mafia-style trafficking vigorously;

15. Condemns looting and despoiling of the cultural heritage;

16. Calls on the European Union and its Member States to support regional coordination in the efforts that they make;
17. Calls on the European Union and its Member States to support efforts to increase the capacities of the States in the region and to mobilise all available resources to protect the people and promote security and development in the region in cooperation with the States in the region and the inter-State organisations ECOWAS and WAEMU;

18. Calls for consideration of the possibility of a European ESDP mission with a mandate from the UN Security Council to provide logistic support to the Malian Army if the Government of Mali requests it and for a possible ECOWAS force or a joint ECOWAS/African Union/United Nations force to secure the areas of Mali not occupied by illegal armed groups;

19. Hopes that the ESDP mission will help the countries in the subregion to control their borders more effectively and particularly to combat trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings;

20. Also condemns the abduction on 24-25 November 2011 of two French nationals, a Swede, a Dutchman and a South African holding a British passport, along with the killing of a German citizen who resisted the kidnappers; notes that this brings the number of EU hostages in the Sahel area to 12, with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb still holding two Spanish nationals and an Italian national abducted in western Algeria in October 2011 and four French nationals abducted in Niger in September 2010; and, on 15 April 2012, a Swiss Christian missionary abducted in Timbuktu;

21. Reiterates its serious concern over the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian and food crisis and calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase and speed up the delivery of humanitarian supplies to the populations in need; notes that the Commission is giving an additional EUR 9 million in response to the new humanitarian needs in northern Mali; points out that urgent efforts are needed in order to open up the humanitarian space and allow food and medical supplies to reach northern Mali; is concerned that, unless such measures are taken rapidly, a major humanitarian crisis may develop which could also have a negative impact on neighbouring countries;

22. Calls for the opening of a humanitarian corridor in order to help tens of thousands of people displaced by the fighting in Mali, many of whom have sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso; also calls for a comprehensive and rapid response to the Sahel humanitarian crisis as a whole;

23. Points out that the current crisis in Mali originates from the country’s economic and social problems and that the needs of the people with regard to access to employment, health, housing and public services urgently need to be met, in which connection everybody must be treated equally, guaranteeing basic human rights, including minority rights;

24. Calls on the European Union to step up its action to assist the people of the region by helping to give them better access to water and public education and health services, as well as better infrastructure in order to improve access to the region;

25. Calls for a detailed assessment of the European Union’s support to the region;

26. Is convinced that a lasting solution in the region should aim to strengthen state institutions, promote active public participation in decision-making and lay the ground for sustainable and equitable economic development;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the institutions of ECOWAS and the African Union, the Interim President of Mali and the UN Security Council.