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Plenary sitting

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B7-0305/2012

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure

on human rights and the security situation in the Sahel region
(2012/2680(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

B7-0305/2012

**European Parliament resolution on human rights and the security situation in the Sahel region
(2012/2680(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- European Parliament resolution on human rights and the security situation in the Sahel region
The European Parliament,
- having regards to the Council conclusions on a European Union Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel of 21 March 2011 (3076th Foreign Affairs Council meeting)
- having regard to the statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on 12 April 2012,
- having regard to the Ban Ki-moon address to the Luxembourg Parliament of 17 April 2012 in which he called upon international community to respond to the growing conflict and unrest in Sahel region and severe drought, where the number of displaced people is growing, food and fuel prices are rising,
- having regards to the distress call sent on the 5 of June to the international community by the Economic Community of West African States after the high-level meeting, which took place in Lome, Togo, aiming at addressing the issue of food security in the region, especially in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad,
- having regards to the Charter to End Extreme Hunger launched in September 2011 by a coalition of NGOs outlining the steps needed to prevent hunger crisis in the Sahel region, which was championed by the UN and the EU,
- having regards to the updated in February 2012 strategic document Preparation for a food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel and neighbouring countries, launched as a strategy to better respond to the risk of a new food and nutritional crisis in the Sahel in 2012 and jointly prepared by Action Against Hunger, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on behalf of the IASC Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group,
- 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 its previous resolutions on West Africa, especially this of 20 April 2012 on the situation in Mali
- having regard to Rule 122 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - A. whereas the combined severe drought, high food prices, migration flows and refugee crisis, chronic poverty, jihadist extremism and deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region caused by conflicts is affecting millions of people as a new food crisis emerges across the Sahel region, forcing people to sell their livestock to cover their household food needs or to consume seeds that should be planted for the next season,

- B. whereas Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other Islamic militant forces such as Ansar Dine are active in the region; whereas in the past years several Europeans have been abducted and held hostage;
- C. whereas the proliferation of arms emanating from Libya, sudden influx of heavy weapons drug trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, high unemployment and poverty are contributing to the raise of extremism and destabilisation of the region as a whole,
- D. whereas clear 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,
- E. 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,
- F. whereas the recent violence and security situation in the region has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, both within northern Mali and over the borders in neighbouring states, thereby exacerbating the food crisis as refugees move into areas with food shortages and humanitarian workers are impeded by lack of security; those who are internally displaced receive little help, as humanitarian agencies cannot access many parts of the region,
- G. 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 majority of those displaced are women deprived of any form of protection, who constitute a particularly vulnerable group,
- H. whereas according to the UN 18 million people have been affected by the drought and conflict-related crisis in the Sahel region of West Africa, and more than 200,000 children died of malnutrition last year – and another one million is at risk of severe acute malnutrition,
- I. whereas UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that the poor harvests, food and nutrition crisis facing countries in West Africa's drought-prone Sahel region has continued to deteriorate at an alarming rate this year compounded by conflict and insecurity, despite commendable early response efforts by governments and international aid agencies,
- J. whereas the worst affected region is currently Niger, country with 15 m inhabitants which accounts for sixth of global child deaths from malnutrition and where the situation has worsened since September when lack of precipitations led to crop failures of up to 80%;
- K. whereas the ECOWAS member states have recorded a 9 percent drop in cereal production this year compared with last, with Sahelian cereal production drop by 26 percent, and Chad and Gambia experiencing 50 percent decreases,
- L. whereas the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (USG) and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos after her visits in May 2012 to Burkina Faso and Senegal called for strong leadership and comprehensive response plans, as well as generosity from donors, to avoid the food and nutrition crisis in the Sahel region becoming a humanitarian catastrophe,

1. Calls on the EU to undertake, with other donors, fast, coherent and coordinated actions to avoid the crisis in the Sahel region becoming a catastrophe, as the humanitarian situation in the region is expected to remain critical at least until the main harvests this autumn,
2. Calls on the UN agencies and partners who appealed in December 2011 for \$724 million to fund the humanitarian response to the crisis in the Sahel to fulfil their commitments accompanied with practical vision and decisive actions to address the root causes of conflicts and humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region,
3. Welcomes the West African community package of \$80 million to respond to the Sahel region emergency crisis, and the EU increase its humanitarian aid to the Sahel region from €45 million to over €120 million since the beginning of 2012, however calls at the same time on the international community to make necessary financial efforts to address the issue,
4. Calls on humanitarian agencies to support national response plans and put in place practical measures to enhance community resilience in the Sahel region, including food and seed distributions to vulnerable families, trainings on how to recognize early signs of malnutrition, providing health services, enabling access to water and sanitation,
5. Urges all parties involved to allow aid agencies safe access to northern Mali in order to prevent a deterioration of the food crisis;
6. Is of the view that immediate and underlying causes behind the deteriorating situation in the region must be tackled; stresses that one of the underlying causes is the extreme poverty of these countries which are therefore weak and unable to fulfil their sovereign functions;
7. Is convinced that in the medium and long-term perspective it is indispensable for international community to focus its actions on helping restoring authority of countries in the Sahel region, building up people's ability to cope with future drought and other shocks in order to reduce dependence on emergency aid, and to improve the hunger-response strategies and fight against structural vulnerabilities, thus tackling the problem in a more efficient way,
8. Stresses that the EU should, in the long term perspective, strengthen the regional approach and support and encourage countries in Sahel region to work together more to deal with the common challenges they face;
9. Urges the EU and international community to focus their activities on protecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households, strengthening the resilience of pastoralists, agro pastoralists and farmers, support the management/conservation of natural resources such as water, trees and soil, provide integrated emergency nutrition assistance to most vulnerable families, especially women, reinforce disaster risk reduction and management at local, national and regional levels, support coordination and strengthening food security information management and early warning systems,
10. Welcomes FAO's Regional Response Programme to the Food and Nutrition Security Crisis in the Sahel to define FAO's priority response interventions in the subregion, linking action in a continuum from emergency to recovery and development, focusing on protecting, restoring and building resilient livelihoods of vulnerable farmers and herders,
11. Recalls that security and development are closely interlinked and therefore, improving the security situation is integral to economic growth and the reduction of poverty in the region,

12. 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;
13. Calls on the EU to work in close cooperation with the authorities and parliaments of the countries of the region, civil society and regional and international bodies, including the African Union and ECOWAS to fight the root causes of poverty, support economic development, wealth creation, good governance and improved access to key infrastructures and basic services for the local population, support the consolidation of state institutions, justice, police and customs to strengthen security and the rule of law in the region with a view to reducing the threat from terrorism, kidnapping and cross-border criminal activity such as the trafficking of drugs and human beings, and prevent human rights violations,
14. Calls on the EU and its Member States to pay particular attention to the vulnerable 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;
15. Unequivocally condemns any acts of terrorism, war crimes, kidnappings and serious violations of human right abuses of the population of Mali, especially in rebel held northern areas;
16. Stresses that in order to stabilise the security situation in the region, there is a clear need for commitment to establishing territorial integrity, peace, democracy and stability across the region,
17. 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,
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the EU and ACP-EU Council and the European Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the UN and AU Secretaries-General, ECOWAS and the EU Member States.