



Plenary sitting

B9-0256/2022

2.5.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on threats to stability, security and democracy in West and Sahelian Africa
(2022/2650(RSP))

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on behalf of The Left Group

**European Parliament resolution on threats to stability, security and democracy in West and Sahelian Africa
(2022/2650(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the 1967 Protocol thereto,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
 - having regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979,
 - having regard to Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment¹,
 - having regard to the report of 16 June 2021 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) entitled 'CFSP Report – Our priorities in 2021',
 - having regard to UN General Assembly resolution 66/290 of 10 September 2012 entitled 'Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome',
 - having regard to UN Security Council resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000 on women, peace and security,
 - having regard to UN General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015 entitled 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development',
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Sahel region is one of the poorest in the world, and faces serious challenges related to human rights, development, security and armed conflicts;

¹ OJ L 335, 13.12.2008, p. 99.

- B. whereas problems related to the region's health systems have reduced people's access to care and the COVID-19 health crisis has further aggravated the situation; whereas in the course of 2021, humanitarian needs have increased exponentially; whereas 14.7 million people in the central Sahel are currently in need of emergency assistance;
- C. whereas according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), 2020 was the deadliest year for Islamist violence in the Sahel 'with an estimated 4 250 deaths, a 60 % increase over 2019'; whereas the Sahel has seen a dramatic increase in sexual violence against women and girls in recent years;
- D. whereas the security situation in the Sahel is a direct consequence of the destabilisation of the region and the proliferation of arms following the NATO-led invasion of Libya in 2011; whereas this flow of arms has ended up strengthening the presence of violent groups in the region; whereas the European military presence in the region has contributed to aggravating the situation;
- E. whereas the Serval (2013) and then Barkhane (2014) operations, led by French forces, together with the G5 Sahel countries and the UN (Minusma), have been unable to put an end to the actions of terrorist groups in the region; whereas the presence of the French army in the Sahel is increasingly being questioned by the population and political leaders, including through mass protest movements;
- F. whereas the security and defence of citizens must be ensured by the public authorities; whereas functions inherent to the state should therefore not be outsourced to private entities; whereas doing so brings with it great risks of violation of human rights and the right of peoples to self-determination;
- G. whereas European Union Capacity Building Missions exist in Mali, Niger and Mauritania, with a focus on training local forces on issues related to combating terrorism and introducing migration control; whereas the enforcement of border controls in the region goes against the free movement policy within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and has had a destabilising effect in the region;
- H. whereas according to the Minusma report of 26 March 2021, the French state lied and refuses to acknowledge its responsibilities regarding the massacre committed during the 3 January 2021 bombing near Bounti, Mali, which killed 19 civilians;
- I. whereas the situation in Western Sahara has strongly deteriorated since the ceasefire between Morocco and the Polisario Front was broken in November 2020; whereas Morocco has launched attacks, including with drones, that have killed civilians in Algerian and Mauritanian territory;
- J. whereas peoples throughout the region, from Gdeim Izik in Western Sahara to Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, have risen up to demand their rights and continue to do so;
- K. whereas a *coup d'état* was staged on 24 May 2021 in Mali; whereas this was the second *coup d'état* in less than a year; whereas an institutional *coup d'état* was staged in April 2021 in Chad, a military *coup d'état* in September 2021 in Guinea, a *coup d'état* on 24 January 2022 in Burkina Faso and an attempted *coup d'état* in Guinea-Bissau in

February 2022;

- L. whereas on 9 January 2022 ECOWAS, supported by France, decreed the closure of Mali's borders with its member states, as well as an economic and financial embargo; whereas the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) has also suspended its financial aid to Mali and frozen its assets;
- M. whereas the whole region is deeply affected by neo-colonialism; whereas this is reflected in particular in the monopolisation of resources and land by multinationals, and the imposition of free trade agreements (FTAs), both of which worsen the economic situation; whereas the imposition of neo-liberal reforms in the Sahel countries and the linkage of state-private relations around natural resources are two of the root causes of the current situation of insecurity;
- N. whereas, under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal plan to cut nearly USD 9 billion from their public spending over the next five years, further reducing their capacity to invest in social policies;
- O. whereas since July 2018, there has been an increase in public demonstrations and other expressions of social protest demanding the disappearance of the CFA franc, a currency imposed on 14 African countries by France, which does not allow for sovereignty over monetary policy in the region;
- P. whereas, according to official data in the EU's 23rd annual report on arms exports, since 2013 EU Member States have granted 506 licenses for military equipment, totalling EUR 205 million, to Mali and Burkina Faso;
- Q. whereas according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 2 million people were internally displaced in the Sahel in 2020 and internal displacement in the region has quadrupled in two years;
- R. whereas the EU provides funds and promotes several projects related to migration control through the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa; whereas these funds are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny and concerns have been raised about their compatibility with human rights and international legislation on the right to asylum;
- S. whereas the overlapping armed conflicts, social and economic crises, and the climate emergency are the root causes of the arrival of refugees from this region in the European Union; whereas an increasing number of people are being forced to flee their homes because of the climate emergency and this reality is unrecognised in most Member States;
- T. whereas the overlapping conflicts and the presence of non-state actors on the ground have resulted in an increase in violence against women and girls in the region, including sexual violence; whereas women's rights activists in the region, including activists against female genital mutilation and in favour of sexual and reproductive health and rights, continue to be criminalised and repressed;
- U. whereas sexual activity between people of the same sex is punished by the death penalty

in Mauritania and in certain states of Nigeria, and is illegal in other countries across the region;

1. Expresses deep concern regarding the climate of violence and insecurity that has increased in West Africa and, in particular, in the Sahel countries in recent years; strongly condemns all attacks committed by armed groups; expresses its condolences to the victims of these attacks and their families;
2. Calls for strict regulation and controls on arms sales to ensure that EU Member States are not involved in the proliferation of conflicts; reiterates its condemnation of the 2011 NATO-led military intervention in Libya; rejects the destabilising presence of third parties in the region, such as the French military in Mali and other countries of the region;
3. Condemns the presence of private military and security companies on the ground such as the Wagner Group, Secopex, Aegis Defence Services Ltd, Erickson Inc., Omega Consulting Group and Berry Aviation, and their involvement in any grave human rights violations;
4. Calls on the Member States to align their arms export policies on the basis of the provision of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment, and to adopt a strict application of all criteria; calls for effective measures to be put in place in order to ensure that Member States comply with this commitment;
5. Firmly opposes the use of drones in extrajudicial and extraterritorial killings, and demands a ban on the use of drones for this purpose;
6. Insists that priority be given to a specific timetable for the departure of French troops and military bases from the region, announced for 2022, in a manner that allows the states concerned to fully assume their role in conditions of lasting peace;
7. Expresses deep concern regarding the human rights impact of the EU's cooperation policy, including cooperation in fields such as security and migration control, with states engaging in repressive activities against their own populations or against migrants and refugees; calls for clear transparency criteria concerning these forms of cooperation, which will ensure that no EU resources are being used to fuel further regional instability or human rights violations;
8. Calls on the regional authorities to uphold the ban on torture, as enshrined, in particular, in the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which most of them have signed and ratified; calls for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the region; highlights that the EU must ensure that no form of cooperation ends up contributing to the violation of the principles of the Convention;
9. Calls for the suspension of the EUCAP Sahel Missions, as it has fuelled regional instability and facilitated violations of the human rights of local populations, as well as of migrants and refugees; highlights that all cooperation in the field of security must be based on a human security approach, as defined by UN General Assembly resolution

66/290;

10. Stresses that all policies in the field of security must focus on tackling the root causes of instability; highlights the role of the goals set out in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in achieving more resilient societies, and calls both for local authorities and the EU, through its different areas of cooperation with the region, to work towards their achievement;
11. Calls for meaningful negotiations to be established between Morocco and the Polisario Front under the auspices of the UN, in line with UN Security Council resolution 690 (1991) and the remainder of the Security Council's resolutions on Western Sahara;
12. Condemns the recent ECOWAS and BCEAO sanctions against Mali and calls for their immediate suspension in order to avoid further worsening the situation of the population by denying them access to essential goods and commodities; calls for the sanctions to be immediately lifted;
13. Stresses the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination without external interference; condemns, therefore, the interference and economic exploitation by the former colonial powers and calls for the immediate removal of the CFA franc in line with the popular demands to that effect, and for the monetary sovereignty of these countries to be ensured;
14. Affirms the need for the EU to carry out an evaluation of the impact of the G5 Sahel and to build a new framework for relations with the Sahel countries, centred on the defence of human rights and on economic and social development;
15. Insists on an end to IMF austerity plans and structural reforms which are a source of impoverishment and the denial of access to basic rights; stresses that people's growing impoverishment provides the socio-economic basis for the development of criminal and terrorist groups; stresses that a lack of access to crucial public services for populations, such as water, sanitation, health or education, constitutes the socio-economic foundations for the development of terrorism;
16. Calls on the international community to eliminate the obstacles to the development of the Sahel by cancelling the debt and interest payments that countries continue to be forced to pay;
17. Stresses the role that the predatory extractive policies of multinational corporations plays in the region's destabilisation; calls, therefore, for the urgent adoption of binding legislation which will ensure that no EU corporations engage outside our borders in activities which result in human rights violations, the exploitation of workers or environmental destruction; highlights the damaging role of FTAs which have gravely damaged the livelihoods and resilience of local communities in the region, and calls for a revision of the Cotonou Agreement along these lines, as well as of the Economic Partnership Agreements with the countries in the region;
18. Highlights that the extraction and transport of energy resources has been responsible for grave environmental damage, displacement and destabilisation in the region; stresses that the ongoing attempt to diversify the EU's energy supply cannot be detrimental to

the interests of peoples in West and Sahelian Africa;

19. Stresses that the principle of non-refoulement is at the core of the right to receive international protection; stresses the damaging consequences that the migration policy designed by the EU for the region has had on local populations, and calls, therefore, for the right of freedom of movement to be respected;
20. Calls for the suspension of the EU Trust Fund for Africa, given its damaging impact on the rights of local populations, as well as those of migrants and refugees, and its lack of transparency and accountability; insists that the funds currently being provided within its framework be redirected towards tackling the root causes of the region's problems through the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
21. Calls for the EU and the Member States to ensure the right to international protection, as well as an adequate reception policy; highlights the number of people forced to flee their homes because of droughts and other extreme phenomena related to the climate emergency; calls for the immediate recognition of climate refugees throughout the EU;
22. Underlines that, in spite of their small contribution to climate change, West and Sahelian Africa are already two of the hardest hit regions; highlights the responsibility of the most polluting countries for this situation, and calls for compensation to be paid in order for the countries in the region to put in place mitigation and adaptation measures;
23. Calls for the EU and its Member States to increase their financial support and humanitarian aid in order to meet the urgent needs of the affected populations; calls for aid to be provided in the form of grants instead of loans so as not to increase the debt burden; deplores the fact that the majority of EU Member States have not achieved the objective of devoting 0.7 % of their GNI to official development assistance, and that some have even lowered the percentage of their development assistance;
24. Highlights that the elimination of violence against women and girls, including through putting an end to female genital mutilation, is a fundamental step towards the achievement of stability and democracy; calls on the authorities of Mali, Chad, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria to clearly outlaw female genital mutilation;
25. Recalls that women have a right to full, equal and meaningful participation in peacemaking, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000);
26. Calls on national authorities across the region to decriminalise sexual activity between people of the same sex and to ensure the rights of the LGBTI population; stresses that people fleeing persecution for being LGBTI must be entitled to international protection in the EU;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the parliaments and governments of the countries in West and Sahelian Africa, and the African Union.