



Plenary sitting

B9-0258/2022

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 S&D 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 its previous resolutions on West Africa and the Sahel,
 - having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 9 March 2020 entitled ‘Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa’ (JOIN(2020)0004),
 - having regard to Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/253 of 25 February 2020, amending decision (CFSP) 2018/906 extending the mandate of the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel¹,
 - having regard to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular SDG 16 on the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol on democracy and good governance,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,
 - having regard to the partnership agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000 (Cotonou Agreement),
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the security situation in West and Sahelian Africa has deteriorated sharply in recent years, presenting a threat to regional and international stability; whereas the populations of these regions have suffered violence and widespread human rights abuses as a result, causing immeasurable suffering and hardship, as well as an increasing number of injuries and deaths;
- B. whereas terrorist organisations including Boko Haram, al-Qaeda and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) are active across the territory, carrying out mass killings and torture and causing displacement; whereas the Sahel saw the most rapid increase in violent extremist activity of any region in 2019; whereas more than 7.7 million people

¹ OJ L 54I , 26.2.2020, p. 9.

have been forcibly displaced across seven countries in the Sahel;

- C. whereas security, development and the protection of fundamental human rights are mutually reinforcing, and necessary for the creation of lasting peace; whereas such a sustainable peace will only be achieved by addressing the root causes of insecurity, including poverty, corruption, hunger and scarcity of resources;
- D. whereas the EU is committed to supporting the security and development of West Africa and the Sahel region through political, diplomatic and humanitarian partnerships, including, inter alia, technical support for security sector reform, military and police training, electoral processes and accountability, and the strengthening of civil society;
- E. whereas the G5 Sahel, a collaborative defence and development effort by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, notably supported by the EU and the African Union, coordinates action in the region for security and stability; whereas the G5 Sahel is facing challenges to demonstrate progress and maintain widespread public support in the Sahel;
- F. whereas the EU has conducted common security and defence policy training missions in Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic, and capacity-building missions in Mali, Niger and Somalia; whereas France's Operation Barkhane was launched in 2014 with soldiers deployed in Mali, Niger and Chad to counter jihadist forces; whereas France announced in December 2021 that it would begin a drawdown of its Barkhane mission in Mali and rely increasingly on the Takuba Task Force, a European military unit; whereas over the past decade African security institutions, notably ECOWAS and the African Union, have deployed thousands of personnel in peace operations on the continent; whereas these interventions have still lacked the capacity to solve the security challenges in the region;
- G. whereas the security challenges across West Africa and the Sahel differ in nature between countries; whereas these challenges include the activities of terrorist organisation with links to international jihadist networks, ethnic and tribal conflicts, clashes over access to natural resources, extrajudicial activities of militias and security services, armed rebellions, separatist conflicts, and political and electoral violence;
- H. whereas terrorists, armed groups, militias and traffickers are exploiting a series of complex overlapping challenges facing West Africa and the Sahel, including climate change, deforestation, the exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation and their impact on crop failures, food insecurity, displacement and conflict, weak institutions and a lack of access to education and employment opportunities, corruption and a lack of confidence in the state; whereas this is driving jihadism and recruitment to extremist organisations;
- I. whereas the Sahel is one of the regions most affected by the proliferation of illicit small arms; whereas the Wagner Group is a private military and security network operating in African countries; whereas the Group has been accused of gross human rights violations;
- J. whereas continued instability poses a serious threat to the transition to democracy and its consolidation; whereas terrorism and unrest are undermining the rule of law and

leading populations across West and Central Africa to lose faith in the ability of elected governments to effectively tackle the growing security threats;

- K. whereas between August 2020 and January 2022, coups d'état took place in Guinea, Chad, Burkina Faso, and twice in Mali; whereas this reflects a growing crisis in democracy and the legitimacy of political systems in the region;
 - L. whereas, in addition to security threats, democratic consolidation in West and Sahelian Africa is further undermined by corruption, crackdowns on popular protest and assembly, restrictions on freedom of expression and of the press, restrictions placed on opposition parties and politicians, the non-respect of presidential term limits and other constitutional provisions, and capacity challenges in providing inclusive and transparent elections for displaced populations;
 - M. whereas the EU, the African Union, ECOWAS and other international organisations have deployed election observation missions across West African and Sahelian countries over the past 20 years; whereas comprehensive reports have been published which include substantial recommendations for reform, only some of which have been taken forward;
1. Strongly condemns the violence and loss of life in West Africa and the Sahelian region, including abuses committed in the context of military operations, and expresses concern at the recent deterioration in the security situation which has profound regional and international consequences; expresses its solidarity with countries in the region which are deeply affected by terrorism;
 2. Reiterates that, first and foremost, the security, stability and prosperity of the region is the right of its inhabitants, who deserve to have peace, human rights, access to justice for the victims and their families, and democracy protected; notes that tackling instability in the region is a pre-requisite in order to advance global security and make progress on achieving the SDGs;
 3. Expresses its support for UN, EU and regional engagement in West Africa and the Sahel for peacekeeping, military training and technical assistance, notably through EU training and capacity-building missions, and initiatives by ECOWAS and the African Union;
 4. Emphasises the EU's commitment to comprehensive engagement in the region on political support, technical and financial assistance, notably for security sector reforms, military training, and support for the protection and strengthening of civil society, which are essential for tackling security threats; recalls the importance of supporting and protecting human rights defenders, peacemakers and conflict resolution advocates;
 5. Recalls that strong institutions are necessary to fight terrorism and tackle domestic challenges, including widening inequalities, by providing reliable basic services; notes in this regard the destructive role corruption plays in weakening institutions and undermining public confidence in the state; urges all parties to commit to working with civil society organisations and international partners to root out corruption in public administrations, the police and security services;

6. Emphasises the importance of allowing free access to humanitarian aid and basic services in conflict areas, including for those living in territories outside government control; recalls that all parties must respect international humanitarian law to avoid any risk of diversion of humanitarian aid; stresses the importance of the delivery of humanitarian aid being perceived as neutral and impartial, and of ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers;
7. Underlines that improving the security situation of the region will require tackling the root causes of violence and conflict, including poverty, climate change, displacement and a lack of access to education and opportunities, all of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; calls for the EU to increase regional coordination of security, development, humanitarian and democracy-support assistance to ensure an integrated approach to peace and security for lasting sustainable development across the region, and a green transition that leaves no one behind;
8. Notes in particular the importance of designing security strategies with meaningful involvement of women – who are disproportionately affected by insecurity and violence – and of young people, whose future – and that of the region – will depend on access to education and employment as a means of sustaining peaceful development and dissuading jihadi recruitment;
9. Expresses its deep concern about recent coups d'état in the region and urges continued dialogue for a rapid return to civilian rule and the organisation of transparent and inclusive elections; demands the release of democratically elected members of parliament and presidents; highlights the importance of protecting civic space, including during transitions;
10. Notes that coups undermine efforts to strengthen the rule of law and to assert the democratic legitimacy of elections and government actions; recalls that genuine democratic transition and reform must be civilian-led and allow for the full and active involvement of civil society organisations, women and young people, opposition parties and the free press, which must be able to operate without violence, intimidation or restrictions;
11. Underlines that the role of regional organisations is key in promoting inter-regional dialogue and coordinating security efforts across national boundaries; welcomes the leading role of ECOWAS and the African Union and reaffirms EU support to work constructively with them on a regional security strategy;
12. Welcomes the role that election observation missions play in supporting and strengthening the democratic process; recalls that EU Member States and countries across West Africa and the Sahel have invited official observer missions, and urges governments in West African and Sahelian countries to continue to do so as part of organising transparent, inclusive and genuinely competitive elections;
13. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of West African and Sahelian countries, the African Union, ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel.

