



Plenary sitting

B9-0259/2022

2.5.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

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))

Michael Gahler, David McAllister, Isabel Wiseler-Lima
on behalf of the PPE 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 resolutions of 16 September 2020 on EU-African security cooperation in the Sahel region, West Africa and the Horn of Africa¹, and of 25 March 2021 entitled ‘A new EU Africa Strategy – a partnership for sustainable and inclusive development’²,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2021 on the situation in Chad³,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2021 on the human rights violations by private military and security companies, particularly the Wagner Group⁴,
- having regard to its resolutions of 17 February 2022 entitled ‘The implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy – annual report 2021’⁵ and ‘The implementation of the common foreign and security policy – annual report 2021’⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 1 March 2022 on the Russian aggression against Ukraine⁷,
- having regard to the 41st Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) between the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) and the EU held in Strasbourg, France, from 1 to 3 April 2022,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
- having regard to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol on democracy and good governance,
- having regard to the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU),
- having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,
- having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,
- having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African,

¹ OJ C 385, 22.9.2021, p. 24.

² OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 80.

³ OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 166.

⁴ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0482.

⁵ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0040.

⁶ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0039.

⁷ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0052.

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 (the Cotonou Agreement)⁸, as amended in 2005 and 2010⁹,

- having regard to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 16 on the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development,
- 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 the Strategy for Security and Development of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) countries of September 2016, the Integrated Priority Actions Framework of February 2020, the Sahel Alliance and the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel,
- having regard to the joint declaration of the members of the European Council with the member states of the G5 Sahel of 28 April 2020,
- having regard to the joint communiqué of the second AU-EU Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting of 25 to 26 October 2021,
- having regard to the Sahel Conference held in Paris on 17 February 2022,
- having regard to the joint declaration of the Sixth AU-EU Summit of 17-18 February 2022,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 21 February 2022 extending and enhancing the implementation of the Coordinated Maritime Presences Concept in the Gulf of Guinea,
- having regard to UN Security Council resolution 2590 (2021) of 30 August 2021 on the renewal of sanctions imposed by Security Council resolution 2374 (2017) and the extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts concerning Mali until 30 September 2022,
- having regard to UN Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) of 9 December 2015 on maintenance of international peace and security,
- having regard to the UN Security Council report of the Secretary-General of 11 November 2021 on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution A/ES-11/1 of 1 March 2022 on the aggression against Ukraine,
- having regard to the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda,

⁸ OJ L 317, 15.12.2000, p. 3.

⁹ OJ L 287, 4.11.2010, p. 3.

- having regard to the communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council held on 31 January 2022 on the situation in Burkina Faso,
 - having regard to the communication of the chairperson of the AU Commission of 6 August 2021 in the wake of the terrorist attacks against Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad,
 - having regard to the communication of the chairperson of the AU Commission of 24 January 2022 on the situation in Burkina Faso,
 - having regard to the Extraordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government of 3 February 2022 on the political situation in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali,
 - having regard to the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell of 26 January 2022 on Burkina Faso,
 - having regard to the ACP-EU JPA resolution adopted on 21 June 2017 on the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region,
 - having regard to the ACP-EU JPA resolutions of 11 March 2021 on democracy and the respect for constitutions in EU and ACP countries, of 28 September 2021 on the role parliaments can play in strengthening international security and of 21 November 2019 on the impact of social media on governance, development, democracy and stability,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Sahel and West Africa play a crucial role in the security and stability of the entire African continent; whereas the security situation in those regions has deteriorated sharply in recent years, presenting a threat to regional and international stability; whereas the security of Europe and Africa are closely interlinked; whereas violence in the Sahel has been increasing ever since the downfall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya in 2011, and as a result, is one of the regions most affected by the proliferation of illicit small arms; whereas the Sahel is one of the poorest regions in the world;
- B. whereas in 2013, after a request by the Malian Government, the French army launched Operation Serval to oust Islamic militants and Tuareg rebels from the north of Mali, who had begun a push into the centre of Mali; whereas the French army successfully fulfilled the objective of preventing Mali from being overtaken by these militants and rebels;
- C. whereas numerous international missions have been launched over the past years, including the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in 2013, the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Niger in 2012, the European Union Training Mission in Mali in 2013, European Union Capacity Building Mission in Mali in 2014, Operation Barkhane in 2014, G5 Sahel in 2014, G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2017, the Sahel Alliance in 2017, the Coalition for the Sahel in 2020 and the Takuba Task Force in 2020; whereas over the past decade, African security institutions have deployed thousands of personnel in peace operations on the continent;

- D. whereas more than 200 members of UN peacekeeping forces and more than 50 French soldiers of the Serval and Barkhane missions, as well as numerous African soldiers, have been killed while fighting for the security of the Sahel region; whereas numerous European and UN soldiers have been wounded during their deployment to the region;
- E. whereas despite the numerous peacekeeping efforts by the Sahel countries and the international community, the situation in the region remains very volatile; whereas terrorist groups, including Islamist terrorists affiliated with ISIS such as Boko Haram, have increased their presence in the Sahel and West Africa region and are responsible for mass killings, torture and forced displacements; whereas the year 2020 saw a sharp increase in killings attributed to, among others, Islamist violence, with a total number of 4 250 deaths being reported according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies; whereas there are currently around 3 million internally displaced people in the Sahel;
- F. whereas humanitarian needs have increased as a result of the various intertwined crises; whereas 20 million people are currently in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in the central Sahel; whereas women and children are particularly vulnerable to and affected by the crisis;
- G. whereas terrorists, armed groups, militias and traffickers are exploiting a series of complex overlapping challenges in the region, including poverty, lack of access to basic social services, food insecurity, deforestation, environmental degradation, weak institutions, corruption and a lack of confidence in the state;
- H. whereas climate change is having a severe impact in the region; whereas this can lead to further destabilisation; whereas there is a grave risk of radicalisation due to economic, social and environmental marginalisation in West Africa and the Sahel;
- I. whereas the burden of debt contributes to threatening the overall stability of countries in the Sahel and West African regions;
- J. whereas the security challenges have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- K. whereas the democratic consolidation in West and Sahelian Africa is being further undermined by crackdowns on popular protest and restrictions on the freedoms of assembly, expression and the press and by restrictions placed on opposition parties and politicians;
- L. whereas the increased security challenges and public discontent with their own governments and the international community has led to a number of public demonstrations calling for further government reforms and improvements to the security situation; whereas accusations of corruption and nepotism against regional government authorities have persisted for a considerable time and have led to a steady decline in trust and satisfaction with governments and their institutions; whereas according to the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index, levels of corruption are uneven across West Africa, with Cabo Verde and Senegal among the best performers in anti-corruption reforms;
- M. whereas the overall state of democracy and security cooperation in the Sahel suffered

enormous setbacks when the militaries in Mali and Burkina Faso toppled their governments, namely in Mali in August 2020, and again in May 2021 when the military toppled the very same government that they had previously installed, and then in January 2022 when a coup d'état took place in Burkina Faso; whereas this reflects a deep-rooted crisis in the region;

- N. whereas ECOWAS and the AU have on numerous occasions organised exchanges and visits to Mali and Burkina Faso in order to mediate and reach compromises between the various actors; whereas on numerous occasions, ECOWAS has underlined the importance of setting a clear timetable for a return to democratic processes, including an imminent date for democratic elections;
- O. whereas respect for the national constitutional order and rule of law is as vital for ensuring peace and stability as it is for combating terrorism and ensuring military security; whereas upholding democratic principles, including the organisation of free and fair elections, is of fundamental importance in order to ensure governments have broad public mandates; whereas citizens in West and Sahelian Africa are supportive of democracy and are seeking fair participation in the democratic process;
- P. whereas the involvement of national parliaments in decision-making on security issues is essential for developing long-lasting security and societal stability;
- Q. whereas security, development and the protection of fundamental human rights are mutually reinforcing and necessary for the creation of lasting peace;
- R. whereas the shrinking space for civil society organisations and press freedom in some countries of West and Sahelian Africa poses serious challenges to democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights;
- S. whereas the EU and ACP countries are committed to supporting the security and development of the region through a political, diplomatic and humanitarian partnership;
- T. whereas the AU is a close partner of the EU in peace and stability efforts; whereas the aims of regional security actors, including ECOWAS and the AU's African Standby Force, overlap with the EU's interest in assisting struggling countries to ensure peace and prosperity; whereas EU and AU leaders have agreed to boost peace and security cooperation on the African continent; whereas the AU-EU memorandum of understanding on peace, security and governance and the European Peace Facility are designed to fight instability, radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism, and to address the entire conflict cycle through an integrated approach;
- U. whereas the G5 Sahel, which is supported by the EU and the AU, provides security and regional development in an effort to combat terrorism and bring stability to the Sahel region; whereas the G5 Sahel is facing challenges in demonstrating progress and maintaining public support; whereas EU-financed activities for conflict prevention, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation are still limited;
- V. whereas all efforts by the international community have contained very strong components of democratic and security sector reforms; whereas most countries in the region suffer from a lack of state capacity to effectively implement much-needed

reforms;

- W. whereas the presence of foreign private military and security companies in West Africa continues to destabilise the security and political environment of the region; whereas the so-called Wagner Group, a proxy group of mercenaries for the Russian Government, has been present in Mali since it was invited by the military junta in late 2021; whereas the Wagner Group allegedly relies on Russian military infrastructure, and the Russian Ministry of Defence is involved in the funding, recruitment, training and protection of Wagner operatives; whereas the Wagner Group stands accused of committing grave violations of human rights;
- X. whereas UN experts have jointly concluded that the Wagner Group has conducted gross and systematic human rights violations in the Central African Republic, including mass summary executions, arbitrary detentions, sexual violence, looting, enforced disappearances and torture during interrogations;
- Y. whereas Russia has and continues to actively spread disinformation throughout the Sahel in order to delegitimise European initiatives aimed at bringing stability and security to help the region;
- Z. whereas as a result of the multiple obstructions by the Malian transitional authorities, international actors have concluded that the conditions to continue their military engagement in Mali are no longer met;
- AA. whereas at the request of their African partners, European and international actors have agreed to continue their joint action against terrorism in the Sahel region, including in Niger and in the Gulf of Guinea, and have begun political and military consultations with them with the aim of setting out the terms for this shared action by June 2022;
- AB. whereas the situation in the Sahel is closely interlinked with the situation in the Gulf of Guinea; whereas piracy remains a security threat in the Gulf of Guinea; whereas the Council has extended the implementation of the Coordinated Maritime Presence in the Gulf of Guinea by two years;
- 1. Expresses concern over the increased instability in the Sahel, which is undermining the security and stability of the countries concerned and is having profound regional and international consequences; expresses its solidarity with and condolences to the families of all victims of terrorist attacks throughout the region; reiterates its strong support for the people of West and Sahelian Africa and their aspirations for peace, human rights, security, stability, economic development and social and democratic progress; pays tribute to the numerous efforts by local and international actors aimed at fostering peace and progress throughout the region; recognises that the security situation in the Sahel continues to be an enormous challenge and that many civilians are suffering from a lack of security and have become the victims of terrorist attacks;
- 2. Expresses deep concern about the state of democracy in the Sahel region and the recent coups d'état in the region; calls on all coup leaders to set clear limits on the duration of political transition periods, to ensure a quick return to the constitutional order, the rule of law and civilian governments and to facilitate the organisation of transparent and inclusive elections;

3. Strongly reiterates its position that any long-term security and political cooperation with EU actors will require realistic timetables for a return to democracy, including clear and measurable milestones; recalls that in the absence of such realistic timetables, any future cooperation with EU actors will be called into question;
4. Notes that coups undermine efforts to strengthen the rule of law and assert the democratic legitimacy of 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, young people and opposition parties; urges the authorities in West and Sahelian Africa to respect and protect media freedom and the freedom of assembly, association and expression;
5. Underlines that genuine national dialogues, involving all sectors of civil society, are needed throughout the region in order to outline a clear future vision for democracy, including concrete objectives jointly agreed and shared by the various non-military and non-state actors; calls on the international community to help facilitate such a dialogue by offering to play a mediating role;
6. Underlines that unity is the best way to tackle the numerous challenges the region is faced with; therefore supports the actions announced by the AU and the actions taken by ECOWAS in defence of democracy and the rule of law;
7. Calls on the military leadership of all states in the Sahel to fulfil their international commitments, including full respect for human rights; supports ECOWAS's efforts to establish a roadmap for human rights reforms and accountability with a view to preventing further human rights violations as part of a holistic effort to settle the various crises;
8. Recalls that the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe does not support the financing of certain operations linked to the military or state security sector or those that may result in violations of human rights in partner countries; calls on all EU Member States to live up to their human rights obligations and refrain from arms transfers that could fuel human rights violations in West and Sahelian Africa;
9. Recalls the important role that Africa's youth can play in establishing a prosperous future for the region; calls also for the increased inclusion and active participation of women in democratic decision-making at all levels and in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts; condemns the use of sexual violence and intimidation of all forms in conflict situations, most notably during military takeovers;
10. Emphasises that people's growing impoverishment provides the socioeconomic 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 socioeconomic foundations for the development of terrorism; underlines the importance of education as the basis for fostering economic growth, creating a democratic society and preventing extremism;
11. Underlines the role that national parliaments play in stability and democratisation; calls for ECOWAS states to further include national and regional democratic bodies in

matters pertaining to security; believes that any intervention by the EU should be subject to a debate within the national parliament concerned; calls for the EU and ECOWAS countries to increase the 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;

12. Points to the significant contribution of the EU and its Member States in terms of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance and welcomes the work of the Sahel Alliance to support development efforts led by the G5 Sahel governments; calls for the full operationalisation and close cooperation of the G5 Sahel with EU Member States through financial capacity building, the exchange of military equipment and the provision of efficient training in military and civilian operations;
13. Reiterates that any long-term strategy can only be successful if it addresses the root causes of violent extremism and improves the living conditions of people on the ground; recognises that the root causes of violent extremism and terrorism are complex; underlines the need to boost the economies of the region, foster job creation and lay the foundations for sustainable long-term development; calls for the EU to tailor its investments and development cooperation to tackling the root causes of terrorism and insecurity;
14. Expresses deep concern about the sharp deterioration in food security across West and Sahelian Africa, which is currently affecting tens of millions of people due the ongoing and increasing vulnerability of these regions' agricultural food systems and supply chains; stresses that West Africa and the Sahel region rely on wheat supplies originating from Ukraine; expresses its gravest concern over the alarming short- and medium-term consequences for food security in West Africa and the Sahel region sparked by Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine and the alarming ensuing potential for the war to generate a new and dangerous hunger and nutrition crisis;
15. Recognises the EU as the leading global donor of humanitarian and development support; 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; regrets that several EU Member States have not achieved the target of devoting 0.7 % of their gross national income to official development assistance;
16. Welcomes the progress made by some countries towards ending corruption; urges African and EU countries to fight all acts of corruption; stresses the link between corruption and environmental crime, both of which pose a growing threat to achieving the SDGs; urges the EU and its Member States to harness anti-corruption policy through enhanced capacity building regarding offences recognised as environmental crimes by the EU, Interpol and the UN Environment Programme;
17. Recalls that climate change is an increasingly important factor in regional stability in West Africa and the Sahel; calls on the West African and Sahel states to cooperate with the EU Member States to tackle the negative consequences of climate change on security and stability in the region;
18. Recalls that strong institutions are necessary to fight terrorism and tackle domestic challenges; stresses the importance of redefining a strategy for combating terrorism and

violent extremism across the regions concerned, in compliance with international standards, and calls on all perpetrators of such actions to be held accountable and brought to justice;

19. 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; calls on ECOWAS and the EU Member States to effectively implement the memorandum of understanding on peace, security and governance;
20. Recalls and underlines that European involvement has always sought and continues to seek to prevent the suffering of the civilian population and elevate their basic living conditions;
21. Acknowledges that the various international missions have not accomplished their primary goal of entirely pacifying the region and that a reflection process on the mandates and roles of international missions and policies is therefore needed; underlines that a revision of the EU's mandates and engagements should focus on making cooperation with West and Sahelian African countries more preventive in nature; urges ECOWAS countries and the EU to jointly develop a new approach to security sector reform and security assistance;
22. Underlines that any European or international support should only be seen as additional to national and regional efforts; recalls that the host countries must maintain ownership of all initiatives taking place in their respective countries; recalls that the political and societal leadership must also therefore support such initiatives in order for them to be successful;
23. Recognises the successes achieved in combating and eliminating the leaders of numerous armed Islamist groups; reiterates the need to combat their propaganda and recruitment initiatives within wider strategies to combat terrorism susceptibility and recruitment; underlines, at the same time, the need to incentivise defections from violent extremist groups and to increase efforts to deradicalise and reintegrate such fighters into society;
24. Strongly criticises the decision of the Malian Government to obstruct cooperation with European actors, notably the Takuba Task Force and Operation Barkhane, expressed, among other actions, through its demand for the departure of the Danish and French contingent from its territory and its refusal to grant a German plane permission to fly over Malian airspace;
25. Condemns the increasing presence of the Kremlin-backed Russian Wagner Group in the Sahel; firmly believes that the involvement of the Wagner Group in West Africa runs counter to the objective of bringing peace, security and stability to the region and is incompatible with security and defence cooperation with the EU; calls upon all countries to examine the Wagner Group's track record, notably in the Central African Republic; expresses its gravest concern about the group's wide range of human rights violations and its violations of international humanitarian law, which continue to be reported; strongly condemns the crimes committed in West Africa and the Sahel by the

Wagner Group and other private military and security companies;

26. Calls on all countries that are cooperating or considering cooperating with the Wagner Group to take into account the developments in Ukraine, where the Russian regime is conducting a brutal and inhumane war in blatant violation of international law; calls on all states to drop any illusions about the ultimate objectives of any Russian engagement in their countries and to acknowledge that Russia and its Wagner Group only focus on their own interests and will use whatever force they deem necessary, as is visible in Ukraine and elsewhere where the civilian population is paying a heavy price;
27. Recalls that the security situation in the Sahel has a direct impact on the security of the coastal states in West Africa, as well as on the security of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood;
28. Reiterates that in the context of the relocation of the Barkhane operation to Niger, mistakes should be identified and lessons learned in order to redesign responses with a greater focus on prevention;
29. Underlines that the international community should intensify economic and political cooperation with those countries that are willing to reform and deliver results in order to serve as regional role models, which can play a role in stabilising the entire region; therefore believes that such positive examples, for example in the coastal region of West Africa, need to be further encouraged and supported; welcomes efforts made by some countries towards democratisation;;
30. Reiterates that the protection and safety of civilians is one of the key tasks of any government and underlines that additional measures should be taken in order to improve the protection of civilians; suggests that such measures could include unarmed civilian protection methods, which have already been successfully put in place by the UN in other conflict situations;
31. Calls on countries in the region and the international community to continue promoting the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security and reiterates its support for the implementation of the UN women, peace and security agenda in the Sahel;
32. Welcomes the Council's decision to extend and enhance the implementation of the Coordinated Maritime Presences Concept in the Gulf of Guinea; calls on the Council to consider reinforcing the concept in the Gulf of Guinea by aerial means; calls for greater involvement and cooperation with the Gulf of Guinea coastal states;
33. 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 ACP-EU Council, the ACP Council of Ministers, the Members of the African Union and the secretariats of ECOWAS, the Accra Initiative and the G5 Sahel.