

**Question for oral answer O-0180/2010
to the Council**

Rule 115

**Arnaud Danjean, Ioannis Kasoulides, Elmar Brok, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra,
Michael Gahler, Krzysztof Lisek, Andrey Kovatchev**
on behalf of the PPE Group

Subject: The Sahel region

The situation in the Sahel-Sahara strip has worsened considerably over the past few years and constitutes a growing security issue for countries in the region and for the European Union. Terrorism and transnational organised crime are rising in this region, close to Europe's borders. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has for the last 3 years been targeting European citizens, even executing several British and French nationals in Niger, Mali and Mauritania. They have recently renewed their direct warnings and threats against European interests. The various traffics in the area – drugs, arms, human smuggling – have now reached a worrying scale. These illegal activities are undermining states in the region. They also have a direct impact on the territory of the European Union, as Europe is one of the main recipients of drugs, cigarettes and human trafficking transiting through the Sahel strip. These current threats show the need to increase the commitment of the European Union in the region.

Significant efforts have already been made in terms of technical assistance: the Commission and the General Secretariat of the Council have adopted an approach targeting this region which combines development and security, missions have been sent on the ground and projects identified in the framework of the 10th EDF as well as the Instrument for Stability. Moreover, certain Member States have launched cooperation actions with affected states in the region. These actions are useful but not sufficient given the challenges faced by the region.

The European Union has the potential to go further. The EU should engage in a specific political dialogue with countries in the region and foster cooperation between the different regional actors. This requires political involvement at the highest level. To accompany this involvement, the EU should use its wide range of instruments as part of a comprehensive strategy, building on political, security and development challenges. These instruments should implement sustainable development policies and build up state capacities.

How does the Council intend to put this issue on the agenda and foster the adoption of a common European strategy towards the Sahel region?

Tabled: 9.11.2010

Forwarded: 10.11.2010

Deadline for reply: 1.12.2010