

## SPEECH

### **Remarks of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel**

**Mohamed Ibn Chambas**

### **On the Occasion of the Conference on Trust Building between Sahel Local Populations and the G5 Joint Force**

22 February 2018

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Dear Colleagues,

I am honoured to participate in this event which is another important landmark in the establishment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which has been a remarkable success story.

When the Heads of State of the G5 Sahel announced their intention to create a Joint Force in November 2015, there were many who doubted the organization's ability to establish such a force.

Since then, two Security Council Resolutions have been passed, two hundred and ninety four million Euros (294 million Euros) have been mobilized in its favour and the force has conducted two military operations.

The United Nations is honoured to have been a partner of the G5 Sahel since its inception and is proud to have played a supportive role in the establishment of the Joint Force, as emphasized by my colleague USG Lacroix. We all know the position of the UNSG and the options.

The Force deserves the continued support of the international community and more importantly, the absolute trust of the local communities it is supposed to serve and protect.

I therefore wish to congratulate the organizers of this event for their creativity in choosing this topic. The conference reminds us all of the need for military and security initiatives to be complemented by medium to long term development efforts in order to tackle structural causes of insecurity in the region.

The proliferation of armed and terrorist groups is eroding State authority in parts of the Sahel and threatens the safety of populations.

The absence of State authority in vast areas, particularly along border areas, coupled with limited social services and the lack of economic opportunities have further facilitated the expansion of illicit trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. Pierre Lapaque will elaborate.

It is not surprising in this context that strictly military-centred approaches to addressing insecurity in the Sahel have proven their limitations to eradicate terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime over the years.

Human rights violations must be prevented and addressed when they occur otherwise they could further drive people and communities towards pledging their allegiance to extremist and terrorist groups.

Therefore, the establishment of mechanisms that ensure that the human rights are respected and development needs of the population are realized in the context of the operations of the G5 Sahel Force are essential to its success.

The United Nations System proposes a tool that matches these requirements. I am pleased to announce that under the guidance and leadership of the Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres, the United Nations has recalibrated its Integrated Strategy for the Sahel to improve our response to challenges facing the region.

The recalibrated UNISS proposes a multi-dimensional framework for addressing the root causes of insecurity in 10 Sahel countries, including of course G5 Member States that are the nucleus of the Sahel.

It is reframed to ensure a holistic alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union's Agenda 2063, the Paris Climate Agenda, as well as national and regional priorities of the Sahel countries.

UNISS and its Support Plan for the Sahel are designed to strengthen the UN's ability to better support national and regional organizations by enhancing investment and programmatic partnerships with governments, private sector, regional and international entities.

It also strengthens linkages between context analysis, risk management and financing modalities in order to sustain rapid, integrated and scaled-up implementation.

The UN Support Plan for the Sahel is being extensively consulted with stakeholders in order to ensure broad partnerships and beneficiary ownership.

In this context, the UN has recently held meetings with the G5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat and the Commander of the G5 Sahel Force, Gen. Didier Dacko, to discuss the modalities of our cooperation, including accompanying measures to complement the military actions of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

Consultations were also held with Government authorities in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger and will continue with Chad and Mauritania as well as with the new Permanent Secretary of the G5, Mr. Maman Sidikou, to define better ways to support national and regional strategies.

We have agreed, with the G5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat, on the importance of a multifaceted intervention. We stand ready to put our expertise, regional presence, and experience at the disposal of the G5 Sahel and our international partners in order to address challenges in the region.

We also agreed with the G5 Sahel on the need for strict respect of international human rights and humanitarian principles. My colleague Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, has already shed light on the UN efforts in the area of human rights.

As a concrete example of the implementation of the UN Support Plan for the Sahel, I am pleased to announce the upcoming Regional Conference on Access to Justice for Peoples and Communities in the Sahel to be organized this semester by the UN in close consultation with the G5 Sahel and all stakeholders. The conference will highlight the UN programme on *“Supporting and Strengthening Access to Justice in the Sahel”*.

We welcome the continued collaboration between the European Union and the United Nations on the Sahel. We look forward to further exploring linkages between the EU’s Sahel Regional Action Plan and our Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

We commend the Spotlight Initiative for Ending Violence against Women and Girls, which could be of immense benefit to the Sahel in the context of trust building between the Joint Force and communities.

I wish to pledge the full support of the United Nations in welcoming Mr. Maman Sambo Sidikou as new Permanent Secretary of the G5 Sahel and wish him succes.

Thank you for your attention.