



OPENING REMARKS

BY THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
FOR THE SAHEL

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Dakar, Wednesday, September 17, 2014

Good morning -

First, let me thank you for being here today and welcome you to my first press conference.

I am convinced that we will have many opportunities in the future to interact in order to maintain a productive and useful cooperation between us.

It is necessary today to share with you my vision of the situation in the Sahel and the role of the United Nations in general and my role in particular.

In a consultative approach, I met with the heads of state and officials of the governments of the countries that my mandate covers primarily –namely: Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. I will do the same in the near future by visiting Chad.

In the same approach, I also met with other regional and international key partners involved in the Sahel region.

Governments in the Sahel region as regional and international partners all share the same conclusion: some developments have been made, but the Sahel region continues to be plagued by many challenges that hinder its development and threaten its stability.

During my visits to the region, I witnessed with appreciation the interest and the commitment of Heads of State and Government to continue institutional reforms which are necessary for good governance-and vital for a sustainable development and stability.

As of next year, the region will also experience important elections.

I hope they will help to further strengthen the reforms already undertaken or in the process-I also hope they inaugurate[elections] an era of stability and prosperity for the entire region.

We must- [all] - governments, stakeholders and other concerned about the present and the future of this region- stay vigilant-

We must- [all] -Act together to do more, better and faster.

Because the threat of terrorism affecting the Sahel region, but also North Africa, West Africa and Central Africa could plunge these spaces into a spiral of violence that will affect the stability of the entire continent for a long term.

In this context, it is important to also stress that the deterioration of the political and security situation in Libya requires an urgent re-mobilization of the international community -in close coordination with the countries of the region- to contain this deterioration and prevent the installation of violence and insecurity in the region.

I also note with great concern the display of violence by Boko Haram, whose barbaric activity threatens not only Nigeria, but beyond.

The continuing political and security challenges in Mali remain, despite the progress of the talks in Algiers, a source of concern.

These challenges –among others-have a huge potential to destabilize the continent, and produce negative consequences on people and regional development.

The adoption by the UN Security Council of the United Nations Integrated Strategy in 2013, the visit of the Secretary General to the Sahel through the organization by the Secretary General of the High Level Meeting on the Sahel in the margins of the General Assembly

of last year, the UN continue their actions to support governments and organizations in the region to better respond to the challenges that face the Sahel region.

The United Nations is working closely with governments in the region using innovative approaches and initiatives, particularly in the areas of governance, security and development, and resilience which represent the three pillars of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

In the humanitarian domain and with regard to resilience, determined actions have been taken last year in order to help the populations in the region:

6 million people received lifesaving food assistance

2.6 million Children overcame acute malnutrition, of which 1 million were at risk of dying

3.3 million farmers and herders were supported to boost their food production

8.7 million Children were vaccinated from life-threatening diseases, such as measles

In the field of security, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in collaboration with the governments of the region and different partners, is currently implementing programs. The objective of these programs is to support the strengthening of capacities in the region and of the accessibility, efficiency and responsibility of criminal justice systems in order to combat efficiently drug trafficking, trans-border crime, terrorism and corruption.

However, the United Nations do not work alone.

I welcome the adoption by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of their respective strategies for the Sahel – as well as the establishment of the Group of 5 – G5 Sahel.

These developments highlight the importance of the Sahel region – but necessitate – an effective coordination of the actions – between all these organizations and actors implicated in the Sahel.

The multiplicity of strategies for the Sahel is positive. But their coordination is a necessity, if we want to change the overall situation in the region.

In this regard, I believe that the Ministerial Coordination Platform of Sahel Strategies, supported by the Technical Secretariat, is the adequate tool. It will allow effective coordination between the diverse strategies and will ensure that actions and efforts of different organizations can achieve positive results for the countries of the region.

To reach this objectif, Mali will, as president of the platform, host the third meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform, which will take place in Bamako mid-November.

While the coordination of Sahel strategies is necessary, the implication and role of governments in the region is essential for transforming the region.

I am convinced that the interest demonstrated by Heads of State and Government to affront the multiple challenges in the Sahel, the will of appropriation and action and in particular the engagement “not to do business as usual” – illustrated by the emergence of the G5 – are the key elements for a new – stable and prosperous – Sahel.

While speaking about stability in the region, I would like to use this opportunity to express my great satisfaction regarding the significant advancements realized under the leadership of Algeria in the inter-Malian negotiations between armed movements and the Malian government. These have led last June to the signature by six armed movements of and the government of Mali of the “Declaration of Algiers”.

I have also been encouraged by the elaboration and signature by the Malian government and the armed movements of the « Roadmap »

and the designation of a mediation Team under the leadership of Algeria, in which the United Nations takes part.

I strongly encourage the two parties as well as the mediation Team to pursue their approach of dialogue and reconciliation in order to achieve a permanent peace which will be beneficial for Malians and the entire region.

It is in this spirit that the international community needs to strengthen its efforts in order to end political and security-related instability in Libya.

The international community needs also to amplify its support to regional efforts to eradicate the terrorist threat of Boko Haram.

The challenges in the Sahel and beyond the Sahel are many in number, but they are not insurmountable.

However, there is need to do more, better and faster to translate the strategies much more quickly into tangible reality for the benefit of the peoples of the Sahel region.

Finally- I would like to thank you for your interest you are demonstrating for the role of the United Nations in Africa, and in particular in the Sahel region.

You will also be associated in my mission – because information and access to information are also important tools of development.

I thank you-

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