



# Security Council

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## Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2391 \(2017\)](#) of 8 December 2017, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General, in close coordination with the members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger – and the African Union, to report on the activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the support provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in this regard. The Council adopted resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#) on 29 June 2022, renewing the mandate of MINUSMA, including enhanced support from MINUSMA to the Joint Force, as authorized by the Council in resolution [2531 \(2020\)](#). The present report covers the period from 12 May to 8 November 2022.

2. The unstable political and security situation in the Sahel continued to have an impact on the operationalization of the Joint Force. The decision of Mali to withdraw from the G5 Sahel in May, following disagreements over the accession of the Malian transitional authorities to the presidency of the mechanism, significantly undermines this key regional security initiative. Meanwhile, among other issues, including the redeployment of Operation Barkhane, the coup d'état in Burkina Faso slowed down the Joint Force's operational tempo, in particular in Sector Centre and Sector West.

#### II. Operationalization of the Joint Force

##### A. Deployment update on the military

3. On 15 May, the Malian authorities announced their withdrawal from the G5 Sahel and its institutions, including the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Consequently, on 25 May, the European Union requested that MINUSMA suspend the provision of life support consumables to the two Malian battalions of the Joint Force, namely the battalions of Boulikessi and Goma Coura. Following the effective withdrawal of Mali from the G5 Sahel, the Joint Force headquarters was temporarily redeployed to N'Djamena at the end of June.

4. The withdrawal of Mali and the relocation of the headquarters interrupted the quarterly delivery of life support consumables to the Joint Force, which resumed at



the end of August, following several rounds of technical consultations between MINUSMA and the European Union.

5. On 21 and 22 September, a meeting of the Defence and Security Committee of the G5 Sahel was held in Niamey after several adjournments since the previous meeting in October 2021. The chiefs of staff of the armies and the ministers of defence and security of the member States confirmed their commitment to the continuity of the G5 Sahel and its institutions, notwithstanding the withdrawal of Mali, and agreed upon the imminent reconfiguration of the Joint Force.

6. The Joint Force continued to conduct military operations across Sectors Centre, West and East of the Joint Force. In total, seven major military operations were conducted. Within Sector Centre, the Joint Force carried out Operation Hamokargui 2, from 11 to 12 May, Operation Kana 3, from 6 to 10 June, and Operation Hamokargui 3, from 19 to 23 July. The operations contributed to intelligence-gathering and the effective establishment of the Joint Force's presence across the tri-border area of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

7. As a follow-up to Operation Kana 2, which ended in March 2022, Operation Kana 3 was jointly conducted by the Burkinabé and Nigerien battalions. During those operations, the Joint Force reportedly secured the area around Markoye along the Burkina Faso-Niger border. Furthermore, within the framework of civil-military action, Operation Kana 3 served to provide military medical services to 469 civilians. Meanwhile, Operations Hamokargui 2 and Hamokargui 3 enhanced civil-military action across Sector Centre.

8. In Sector West, on the border between Mauritania and Mali, two reconnaissance military operations were conducted by the Mauritanian battalion of the Joint Force, namely Operation Ravgue 1, from 28 May to 3 June, and Operation Ravgue 2, from 5 to 10 September. The Joint Force reported that those operations had served to secure the zones of Adel Bagrou, Bogla and Nbeiket el Ahouach along the Mauritanian frontier with Mali and that medical support had been provided to approximately 120 people.

9. In Sector East, along the Niger-Chad border, the Joint Force conducted Operations Nadhif 1, from 28 May to 1 June, and Operation Nadhif 2, from 5 to 15 September. Both military operations were effective in dissuading arms trafficking across the Libyan border, reportedly by discouraging incursion by non-State armed groups and recovering munition, including more than 84 weapons.

## **B. Deployment update on the police component**

10. There are no updates for the period from 12 May to 8 November 2022.

## **C. Secretariat and institutional framework of the Group of Five for the Sahel**

11. The G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat continues to operate notwithstanding the withdrawal of Mali from the organization. The G5 Sahel continues to hold meetings and workshops with the support of international partners, including the United Nations, with a view to implementing the Priority Investment Programme. On 2 August, it inaugurated the G5 Sahel Regional Police Academy in N'Djamena and held a workshop aimed at bolstering the security coordination platform.

12. The Executive Secretariat and other components of the G5 Sahel continued their activities, such as the operationalization of the gender policy of the G5 Sahel and its

training for women leaders on dialogue, in conjunction with the African Union and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. Other activities were organized jointly by G5 Sahel entities and donors to strengthen the prevention of violent extremism and empower local authorities in security governance. Several United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have continued to implement their programmes in support of the G5 Sahel, including those involving regional capacity-building in the areas of criminal justice, border security management and the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism.

13. In the context of the withdrawal of Mali from the G5 Sahel, diplomatic efforts continued with a view to encouraging Mali to rejoin the organization. Mauritanian and Chadian authorities sent delegations to Mali in May. On 14 July, the President of the Niger, Mohamed Bazoum, and the President of Chad, Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, publicly called for Mali to rejoin the G5 Sahel at a joint press conference in N'Djamena.

14. Furthermore, the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Annadif Khatir Mahamat Saleh, engaged with ministers from Mauritania, Chad and Mali and with Mr. Bazoum on the need for solidarity among the member States of the G5 Sahel. He received positive feedback from his interlocutors. Similarly, the Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel, Eric Y. Tiaré, met with the Heads of State of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger to enhance internal cohesion within the organization. As a result of those diplomatic efforts, a summit of Heads of State is envisaged in Nouakchott before the end of 2022.

15. On 23 June, the Defence and Security Committee met in Niamey, with the participation of Mali. All participants agreed in principle to establish bilateral coordination mechanisms to ensure cohesion between neighbouring countries. Efforts to enhance bilateral cooperation are noted between Mali and Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger, and Chad and the Niger.

16. Thereafter, the reconfiguration of the Joint Force was discussed during the Defence and Security Committee meeting held on 21 and 22 September. At the meeting, it was decided to elaborate a new concept of operations for the Joint Force in which the evolving security and humanitarian situation and the withdrawal of Mali would be considered, and participants called for enhanced bilateral cooperation, including an increase in the number of coordinated operations by neighbouring countries. It was also decided to freeze the command posts across sectors, with the intent of establishing ad hoc posts according to the military operations, while reconfiguring the headquarters, which is expected to be a more agile and cost-efficient structure.

### **III. Implementation of the technical agreement**

17. MINUSMA continued to provide support to the six battalions of the Joint Force outside Mali, namely Dori in Burkina Faso, Wour and Eighth battalion in Chad, Nbeiket el Ahouach in Mauritania, and Téra II and Madama in the Niger. This is in accordance with the tripartite agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat and with Security Council resolutions [2391 \(2017\)](#), [2480 \(2019\)](#), [2531 \(2020\)](#), [2584 \(2021\)](#) and [2640 \(2022\)](#). While no tripartite meeting was held, technical consultations between MINUSMA, the European Union and the Joint Force continued for the implementation of operational and logistics support.

**Life support consumables**

18. From 17 September to 15 October, MINUSMA delivered a total of 499,486 litres of diesel and 43,414 litres of oil and lubricants to the Joint Force headquarters and battalions for the second quarter of 2022, in accordance with the support request received from the Joint Force on 30 April. This was in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. The Mission mobilized one Malian and two international vendors to ensure the delivery of life support consumables in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger.

19. The delivery of 72,640 individual ration packs commenced on 17 September and included 16,320 packs remaining from the first quarter of 2022, intended for the two Malian battalions of Boulikessi and Goma Coura, and the Téra II battalion before its redeployment from the Niger to Chad, all of which ration packs were rerouted to Dori, Burkina Faso, and Nbeiket el Ahouach, Mauritania, by 26 September.

20. To enhance operational effectiveness during the third and fourth quarters of 2022, MINUSMA and the European Union agreed to commence segmented deliveries, which was endorsed by the Defence and Security Committee on 22 September. Implementation started thereafter with the support requests received from the Joint Force for those quarters on 5 September and 6 October, respectively.

**Engineering support**

21. MINUSMA did not provide engineering support, as it was not requested.

**Casualty evacuation and transport**

22. MINUSMA did not provide casualty evacuation or transportation support, as it was not requested.

#### **IV. Implementation of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework and the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces**

23. MINUSMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued to support the Joint Force in human rights and humanitarian law compliance, capacity-building, combating impunity, and the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy. In accordance with the policy, MINUSMA conducted 16 risk assessments in response to requests for support submitted by the Joint Force for the battalions operating in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger. Tailored mitigation measures were recommended to address the risks identified in the process. Meanwhile, limited progress was made in relation to the implementation of the mitigation measures, and a number of recommendations became redundant owing to the withdrawal of Mali from the G5 Sahel.

24. OHCHR continued to support the Joint Force in human rights and humanitarian law compliance and capacity-building for battalions and provost units. In that context, the Office conducted two training sessions in Mauritania and the Niger and two series of 12 awareness-raising activities, one for the G5 Sahel command posts in Sector East and the other for the G5 Sahel battalion based in Téra, Niger.

25. From 17 to 20 May, OHCHR facilitated a training workshop in Niamey for instructors from the police, the gendarmerie, the National Guard, the Nigerien Armed

Forces, Civil Protection, the prison administration and the Central Counter-terrorism Service schools and training centres. As a result, participants, including five G5 Sahel officers from Sector Centre in Niamey, will be able to serve as trainers on aspects of human rights and international humanitarian law compliance. In addition, OHCHR delivered a training session for the Joint Force provost unit on human rights and the judicialization of military operations, from 23 to 26 May, in Néma, Mauritania.

26. The activities of OHCHR described above contributed to its efforts to support the operationalization of the G5 Sahel police component. In that vein, the Office is currently identifying ways to strengthen collaboration with additional partners in the field, such as the support programme for legal and provost components of the Joint Force for the improved functioning of military justice in the G5 Sahel countries.

27. In addition, between May and August, OHCHR organized a series of 12 sessions for officers and non-commissioned officers of the Joint Force command post in N'Djamena in Sector East to raise awareness of the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law and the specific aspects of the Joint Force's compliance framework as well as its operational context, such as the role and responsibilities of the police component and its collaboration with the military. Each session was attended by at least 36 participants (including at least 3 women).

28. On 12 September, in the context of a field mission to Téra from 11 to 15 September, OHCHR held an awareness-raising session on human rights and international humanitarian law for 30 officers and non-commissioned officers (including 1 woman) of the Nigerien battalion of the Joint Force based in Téra. The activity reinforced participants' knowledge of conflict-related sexual violence, the six grave violations of children's rights in armed conflict, and the relevant responsibilities of the commanding officers and other line managers.

29. On 13 September, OHCHR organized a workshop in Téra to revitalize an early warning mechanism, the creation of which it had supported in November 2021 to facilitate communication and collaboration among populations, local authorities and the Joint Force in order to improve the protection of civilians. The workshop, which was attended by 20 participants (including 3 women) from the defence and security forces, the public administration, civil society and traditional authorities, provided an opportunity to review the security situation in Téra Department and to update the 2021/22 annual workplan for the mechanism.

30. On 20 and 21 April 2022, in Niamey, to support the Joint Force in better mainstreaming the protection of civilians into its military operations, OHCHR and the Joint Force command post in Sector Centre organized a joint "after-action review" session on the Kana 1 and Kana 2 military operations conducted in the tri-border area in February and March 2022, respectively. The training allowed participants to jointly assess the application of human rights and international humanitarian law during the operations, as well as their impact on the civilian population. Moreover, it facilitated the formulation of recommendations for improving practices in future operations and better integrating human rights and international humanitarian standards into military operations.

31. Following investigations into allegations of the extrajudicial killing of several Mauritanian citizens, as well as beatings and the pillaging of the property of civilians on 5 and 6 March 2022 in Mali, close to the border with Mauritania, OHCHR concluded that those violations were not attributable to the Joint Force, as did the Panel of Experts on Mali, which attributed the killings to the Malian Army and "white-skinned soldiers" in its report of 3 August 2022 (see [S/2022/595](#), para. 99). From 20 to 24 July, OHCHR conducted a monitoring and investigation mission to Sereidouba village, where some of the family members of the victims have found refuge. The OHCHR team was informed that a delegation of the Government of

Mauritania led by the Ministry of Religious Affairs had visited the locality to express the sympathy of the Government and provide financial support to 14 families of victims. The conclusions of the joint commission established by both countries to investigate the allegations have yet to be made public.

32. From 6 to 10 June, OHCHR conducted a mission to Dori, Burkina Faso, to investigate allegations of summary and extrajudicial executions during military operations on 10 and 11 April 2022 in villages located in Gorom and Markoye communes. OHCHR teams interviewed about 15 victims and witnesses and other local sources and concluded that the Joint Force was not directly involved in the operations. An investigation is ongoing to ascertain the potential involvement of some Joint Force soldiers operating under national command.

33. During the night of 25–26 May, three individuals, including a soldier assigned to the Nigerien battalion of the Joint Force based in Téra, reportedly broke into the home of a shopkeeper there. Following preliminary investigations conducted by the local gendarmerie, under the leadership of the public prosecutor of Téra, the case was transferred to the Government Commissioner based in Niamey, who placed the suspects, including the Joint Force element, under a committal warrant. Pending their trial by the military tribunal, the suspects have been detained at the civilian prison in Niamey.

## V. Issues and challenges

34. The political divergences between the G5 Sahel member States, which culminated in the withdrawal of Mali from the organization, further contributed to hampering the implementation of MINUSMA support for the Joint Force.

35. Technical and operational challenges remained a matter of concern. These included a lack of storage capacity at some battalion locations or areas of operations, insufficient maintenance of storage equipment, specifically for combat rations, and the delayed provision of tax exemption letters by the member States. To address the challenges, MINUSMA relied on its private contractors operating in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger, which provide support to the Joint Force battalions. Meanwhile, MINUSMA maintained outreach with the Joint Force Commander and G5 Sahel national authorities.

36. Furthermore, insecurity and the lack of infrastructure along supply routes continued to pose challenges. For instance, the bridge of Nare in Burkina Faso was attacked and damaged twice, on 15 July and 22 August, and subsequently repaired on 20 July and 26 August, respectively. In consultation with the Joint Force, alternative supply routes from Kaya to Dori in Burkina Faso were used during the months of July and August.

## VI. Related developments

37. The Independent High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel, chaired by the former President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, was launched at the high-level meeting on the Sahel, on the margins of the high-level week of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, under the auspices of the United Nations, the African Union Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the G5 Sahel. At the meeting, participants highlighted the challenges to peace and security in the Sahel, including the surge in violent extremism, fragile economies under stress from climate change, and the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as complex political transitions. They

expressed support for the work of the Panel and the strategic review of the broader international engagement in the region. The need to enhance cross-pillar coordination and support across the three pillars of governance, resilience and security in the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel was also raised. The Panel will take strategic stock of the international engagement in the region and make recommendations on how to improve overall effectiveness.

## VII. Observations

38. The growing terrorist onslaught in the Sahel constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. I am deeply concerned by the impact of the crisis on civilians: the increasing number of displaced persons; rising food insecurity; the abuse of human rights, in particular women's rights; and the denial of access to education for millions of children.

39. This situation is of strategic concern not only for the subregion but for the African continent and beyond. It therefore calls for a multidimensional response coordinated among neighbouring countries with the support of their regional and international partners. The Joint Force is an important regionally led component of the response to insecurity that complements the multifaceted engagements by the United Nations and other international partners in the region.

40. I welcome all efforts that are being deployed to improve the effectiveness of the Joint Force and promote good relations and cooperation among the G5 Sahel member States. The United Nations will continue, through the special representatives in the region, to support these efforts.

41. Critical to the efficacy of the Joint Force and the sustainability of its operations is its respect for human rights and international humanitarian law obligations during military operations. In this regard, OHCHR will pursue its efforts to support the Joint Force in operationalizing its compliance framework.

42. The most enduring, long-term solutions to the drivers of insecurity are good governance, respect for human rights and inclusive sustainable development that leaves no one behind. With a view to tackling the vast challenges in the Sahel, beyond the Joint Force, there is a need for an adaptive, agile framework for cooperation underpinned by sustained efforts cutting across social, economic, political, developmental, humanitarian and recovery instruments and support.

43. In this context, I look forward to the findings and recommendations of the Independent High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel, under the leadership of the former President of the Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou.