



# Security Council

Seventy-third year

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New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Ipo . . . . .	(Côte d'Ivoire)
<i>Members:</i>	Bolivia (Plurinational State of) . . . . .	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China . . . . .	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Equatorial Guinea . . . . .	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia . . . . .	Mr. Woldeyes
	France . . . . .	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan . . . . .	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait . . . . .	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands . . . . .	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru . . . . .	Mr. Tenya
	Poland . . . . .	Mr. Lewicki
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden . . . . .	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Hunter

## Agenda

### Peace and security in Africa

United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, an integrated response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Peace and security in Africa**

#### **United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, an integrated response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel; His Excellency Mr. Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; Mr. Hafez Ghanem, Vice President of the World Bank for Africa; and Mr. Rémy Rioux, on behalf of the Sahel Alliance.

Mr. Ghanem and Mr. Rioux are joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Washington, D.C., and Paris, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr Thiaw.

**Mr. Thiaw** (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having invited me to brief the Security Council in my capacity as Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. I commend the presidency of Côte d'Ivoire for having taken the initiative to convene this meeting.

Given the geographical and geopolitical position of the Sahel, it is clear that peace, security, stability and development in the region have a direct impact not only on neighbouring African countries, but also on Europe and the rest of the world.

*(spoke in English)*

The Sahel is one of the least developed regions in the world. It faces simultaneous challenges of extreme poverty, the dire effects of climate change, frequent food crises, rapid population growth, fragile governance and terrorist-linked security threats. The world-famous trade and migration routes across the Sahel and the Sahara are being taken over by transnational organized crime organizations and large-scale traffickers. The

authority of States is being challenged. The justice system is being questioned, while the traditional means of conflict prevention and resolution have been made somewhat redundant by modern States.

Conflicts over land, water and other resources are increasing at an alarming rate. The growing number and severity of the conflicts between farmers and herders are largely due to competition, driven by fast-growing populations and access to resources that are dwindling due to land degradation and climate change. Criminal activities, both on land and at sea, along with terrorist networks, have reached levels that may threaten the very stability of States as well as the social fabric of societies. The profits generated from human, drugs and arms trafficking can only serve to make the precarious situation even less tenable. A small proportion of the criminal or illegal proceeds is instead used to feed extremism and exacerbate instability.

*(spoke in French)*

While the humanitarian situation has improved slightly in 2018, owing mainly to a relatively good rainy season, there are still significant needs in the region. More than 8 million people are at risk of food insecurity in 2019. This year, around 10 million people have experienced food insecurity in the Sahel, of whom around 5.8 million are in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal and Chad — countries that have experienced severe droughts since the end of 2017. Acute malnutrition has reached unprecedented levels in those six countries and is likely to continue.

In 2013, the Council adopted the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which was a visionary decision and a clear sign of our recognition of a shared destiny in confronting the transboundary nature of the threats in the Sahel. The Council therefore adopted a long-term approach, integrating humanitarian, security and development aspects. In 2018, the Secretary-General gave new impetus to the Integrated Strategy by adopting the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel — an inclusive document that was drawn up under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, based predominantly on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

The Support Plan is part of a preventive, integrated and concerted approach to strengthening governance, security and development in the Sahel region. As such, if the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is to remain our sole frame of reference, the Support

Plan must form the basis of our collective action in the 10 countries of the Sahel. The Support Plan requires the agreement and mobilization of all.

One of the aims of the plan is to strengthen coordination and cooperation between the actors involved in the Sahel. The Support Plan was designed not only to strengthen the response of the United Nations and the quality of support offered to the Member States in the region, but also to provide a standard for our partners. That is why, ever since I assumed office as Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, I have consistently facilitated dialogue and forged partnerships. That has enabled me to have many discussions with the leaders of African countries and institutions that are the most involved in the process. I have also sought to engage in dialogue with different segments of society, including women, youth and traditional leaders.

Today, we are at a critical juncture for the stability of the entire Sahel region. On the basis of my discussions, I would like to make three observations regarding the implementation of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.

First, in order to ensure lasting peace and stability in the Sahel, the root causes of its instability must be addressed. An exclusively security-based approach alone will not be enough to stabilize the Sahel. In order to achieve lasting peace, we must launch in parallel a vast development programme that will make it possible to positively transform the economies of the region, improve the living conditions of the populations and restore hope to young people. Our efforts in the Sahel give us the tremendous opportunity to move from words to action and to apply, in one of the most disadvantaged regions in the world, both the principles and the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely, the commitment to leaving no one behind. Our challenge here is to ensure the effective operationalization of the link between development and sustainable peace. We must not only see an increase in development aid and cooperation with Governments, but also establish conditions conducive to mobilizing significant private investment.

Secondly, solutions to the challenges that the Sahel faces must be provided by local, national and regional actors, and enjoy the support of external partners, where necessary. The United Nations will continue to cooperate with bilateral and multilateral actors and

leverage the initiatives already in place in order to provide coherent and coordinated international support. The countries of the region have made sustained efforts and their actions are beginning to bear fruit, as demonstrated by the relaunch of the Nouakchott process, the revision of the African Union strategy for the Sahel and the success of the Group of Five for the Sahel donor and partner coordination conference, held on 6 December in Nouakchott. In that context, I commend the efforts of the regional bodies of the United Nations with which we work closely, including the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations Development Group for Western and Central Africa and the United Nations country offices in the 10 target countries. I also highlight the excellent relations with the cooperation partners, many of whom have connected within the Sahel Alliance.

On 17 December, I had the honour of addressing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at a meeting devoted to international and regional initiatives in the Sahel region. I drew the attention of members in particular to the urgent need to find adequate solutions to the growing and increasingly deadly conflicts between farmers and herders in the Sahel. It is important to prevent disputes related to competition for access to natural resources from turning into ethnic, religious or cross-border conflicts. In that regard, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union made it clear that coordination and integration are not a choice but a necessity. It was therefore agreed to further harmonize our approaches and adapt our common responses based on our comparative advantages, in particular through the Ministerial Coordination Platform for Sahel strategies, which needs to be strengthened so as to realize its full potential as a political tool.

Thirdly, we must change the perception of the region by highlighting its many assets and its potential. The Sahel is in a unique position to boost its economy through renewable energies, particularly solar and wind energy. Those new technologies can also make the primary sector — on which the vast majority of Sahelians depend — less vulnerable and more adapted to climate change. The success of those efforts will depend largely on progress in good governance, resource mobilization and the integration capacity of the actors involved.

For its part, the United Nations is tasked with rethinking its mode of operation in the Sahel in order to include joint programming, further integration and

more effective action. To that end, we are setting up a mechanism for the Sahel within the Sustainable Development Goals Fund. The mechanism aims to reduce fragmentation and make United Nations action in the Sahel more effective. A flexible and transparent mechanism of that nature will also make it possible to respond more quickly and better to the often unpredictable long-term needs that arise in the Sahel.

Let me conclude by welcoming the international community's renewed focus on the Sahel region. We have a strategy, a shared vision and an operational support plan. Sahelians rightly believe that the time has now come to turn our plans and words into concrete action.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Thiaw for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jinga.

**Mr. Jinga**: I would to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Council today in my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) during this very important and timely meeting on peace and security in Africa, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and an integrated response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel.

On 18 December, the Security Council adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2018/20 on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. That is further testimony to the Council's recognition of and support for the important role that the Peacebuilding Commission is playing in fostering coordination and coherence in international peacebuilding efforts. The engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission on the situation in the Sahel began with presidential statement S/PRST/2017/2, adopted on 20 January 2017, which emphasized the convening role of the Commission in mobilizing international support, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, towards the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

Since then, the Commission has convened a series of meetings on the situation in the Sahel, with the participation of the countries of the region, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), the African Union, the European Union, different parts of the United Nations system and other national and regional actors. The Commission has been focused primarily on deepening partnerships and ensuring the cooperation,

coordination and coherence of the United Nations and the international community in support of the Sahel. On 30 January, the Council adopted another presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/3), which reiterated the importance of the convening role of the PBC in peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts in the Sahel.

In March 2018, in support of the Sahel countries' efforts to foster coherence and ensure coordination, I attended the sixth meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel held in N'Djamena, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas; the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco; and the Permanent Representative of Chad to the United Nations, Ambassador Ali Alifei Moustapha. On the margins, we met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Zene Cherif, and the Minister of Economy and Development Planning of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Issa Doubragne. I also had the opportunity to visit a project, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, at the border of Chad and Cameroon, where I interacted with the local population, community leaders, civil society and the United Nations country team.

From 15 to 19 October, I once again joined Special Representative Chambas and Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco on a regional visit to West Africa and the Sahel. In Ouagadougou, we met with the President of Burkina Faso, His Excellency Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré; the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry; the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Her Excellency Ms. Rosine Sori-Coulibaly; and the Minister of the Civil Service, Labour and Social Security, His Excellency Mr. Clément Sawadogo. We also met and exchanged views with the diplomatic community, representatives of civil society and the United Nations country team.

In Dakar, we attended the launch of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel study on pastoralism and security in the region. We also met with the United Nations regional directors team, who are playing a key role in United Nations efforts in the Sahel region. My engagements with Government officials, civil society, United Nations regional directors and country teams in Chad, Burkina Faso and Senegal

provided me with useful insights into the multifaceted challenges facing the Sahel region.

In Abidjan, we met with the Vice-President for Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery of the African Development Bank, Mr. Khaled Sherif, as part of our continued efforts to enhance the strategic partnership with international financial institutions in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Our discussions focused mainly on ways to reinforce coordination and coherence in support of the countries of the Sahel region. The Vice-President of the African Development Bank assured us that the Sahel is also one of the bank's major priorities, and we emphasized the potential for enhanced coordination with the United Nations in support of countries in the region, including through the Peacebuilding Fund and the Bank's 10,000 Communities in 1,000 Days initiative.

Council members will also recall that in July, at the meeting between the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the African Union Peace and Security Council here in New York, we explored ways to deepen the strategic partnership with the African Union in support of the Sahel region. Overall, my visits to the Sahel and interactions with national authorities, civil society, the diplomatic community and United Nations regional directors and country teams allowed me to gain a better understanding of the important role the Peacebuilding Commission can continue to play in support of the Sahel.

On 12 November, the Commission held its annual session on the situation in the Sahel. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Secretary-General, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, the Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel, local elected officials, and representatives of women and civil society organizations from the Sahel region. The annual session provided a unique opportunity to deliberate on the political, security, social, economic and environmental challenges faced by the countries in the Sahel.

Furthermore, the annual session allowed Member States to explore opportunities to strengthen partnerships and to bring coherence to international support for the Sahel region. On 13 November, the PBC and the Economic and Social Council dedicated their joint annual meeting to the linkages between climate change, peacebuilding and sustaining peace in

the Sahel. Both meetings underscored the importance that the Commission continue using its platform to sustain international attention and advance a more coherent, coordinated and action-oriented approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel region.

Over the past couple of years, in close collaboration with the countries of the region and United Nations leadership both at Headquarters and in the field, the Peacebuilding Commission has used every opportunity to sustain international attention and support in addressing the multifaceted challenges of the Sahel. The Commission will continue to prioritize the Sahel region with the support of the Council. I wish everyone happy holidays.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jinga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ghanem.

**Mr. Ghanem**: I am most grateful for this opportunity to brief the Council today on what the World Bank is doing in the Sahel. I would like to express my special thanks to Mr. Thiaw, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, with whom we have been working very closely.

Our engagement in the Sahel takes place at a time when sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing a growing number of people living in poverty. Tragically, this is partly driven by fragility and insecurity. Indeed, violent conflicts have spiked dramatically since 2010 and the fragile landscape in which we all operate is becoming ever more complex. Peace and stability are necessary for economic development, but the inverse is also true; there can be no lasting peace without economic development, without opportunities for young people and without hope for a better future. There is a need to address the economic and social drivers of conflict in the Sahel.

That is why we at the World Bank have committed more than \$9 billion to the development and resilience of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger — over the past five years. We have been able to do this thanks to the support of the international community through the International Development Association — the Bank's fund for the poorest. This financing, along with policy advice and technical assistance, tries to address the social and economic drivers of fragility and conflict faced by the Sahel.

The most notable among these drivers are low State legitimacy and presence in certain areas where we see a lack of many basic services, high youth unemployment and limited opportunities. Beyond the numbers, we are also changing our way of working to reflect the challenges posed by such fragility. We are putting more emphasis on a special approach for rapid results that concentrates activities in defined locations selected to support and unlock opportunities created by the stability brought by security forces. We have tried to follow the security forces and stabilize the areas that are being liberated.

Secondly, we are putting more of our people on the front line through a stronger presence on the ground in our country offices. Thirdly, we are improving supervision of our operations, including through satellite-imaging and mobile-based monitoring. Our new approach concentrates the activities of several existing projects led by the World Bank and other donors in the locations most at risk. This approach has been tested in the town of Konna, in the centre of Mali. Here, rehabilitation of the fishing port — which is the key hub of economic activity in the area — is being supplemented by additional investments that range from the installation of solar panels and the construction and rehabilitation of rural roads to the introduction of cash transfers for those most in need and the development of income-generating activities.

I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations; France, through the Agence Française de Développement; and Germany, among others, which have been key partners in the application of this model. This new approach holds promise and will be replicated beyond Mali.

In July 2017, the Sahel Alliance was launched by France, Germany, the European Union, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg have now joined this important initiative, strengthening our already close partnership. A memorandum of understanding between the Sahel Alliance and the G-5 Sahel, which was signed in October, is laying the groundwork for better synergies between security and development. Together we are developing multisectoral and rapid response interventions in selected areas, as I have just highlighted. I am pleased that the World Bank commitments today account for more than half of the projects monitored by the Sahel Alliance. We have pledged \$1.2 billion to the

G-5-supported Priority Investment Programme, which was agreed upon last month in Nouakchott.

In conclusion, I am more convinced than ever that, together, we can support the Governments and people of the Sahel to build a pathway to peace, stability and economic development. With the support of the Council, the World Bank is committed to sustaining such efforts for the months and years to come.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ghanem for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Rioux.

**Mr. Rioux** (*spoke in French*): I am deeply honoured to address the Security Council. I thank Ibrahim Thiaw for having invited me to speak to the Council on behalf of the Sahel Alliance. The Coordination Unit of the Sahel Alliance is currently hosted by the Agence Française de Développement, which I am head.

The Sahel Alliance was jointly launched on 13 July 2017 in Paris by the German Chancellor, the President of the French Republic and the High Representative of the European Union. The initiative immediately garnered the resounding support of the World Bank, which I commend; the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 2018, the Alliance grew to include Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands. Observer members have also joined the Alliance.

The goal of the Alliance is to contribute to the development of the Sahel and to reduce its social, economic, environmental and institutional vulnerability. The battle against violent extremism can be won only if development is pursued at the same time and with the same rigour. The Alliance is fully aligned with the priorities of the United Nations Secretary-General, namely, conflict prevention and strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable societies. It stands in full harmony with the framework established by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

To tackle the deep-rooted or immediate causes of crises, the Alliance prioritizes in all its activities economic, social, political and cultural inclusion and respect for rights to strengthen social bonds, which are eroded by mistrust and exclusion. It seeks to include young people, women and marginalized populations and to implement a participatory approach at all levels.

The Sahel Alliance coordinates the endeavours of its 12 members to expedite the implementation of development projects in the Sahel countries that are in the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), namely, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad. A partnership agreement was signed with its permanent secretariat on 30 October.

The members of the Sahel Alliance have decided to focus on and enhance their action in six priority areas, which do not include all their respective action in the Sahel area: education and youth employment, agriculture and food security, energy and climate change, local infrastructure and decentralization, governance and domestic security. While working on these six areas, the Sahel Alliance has brought all the projects of its members under one common umbrella. This portfolio currently amounts to over €9 billion, which will be disbursed across more than 600 projects between 2019 and 2023. Some projects amounting to €4 billion have just been launched and a great many new projects totalling €5 billion have been identified. All of these programmes have been designed in line with existing national or regional strategies. In 2018 alone, a total of €1 billion has been disbursed in the Sahel region.

In order to make the assistance provided to the Sahel more effective and in harmony with the approaches championed in the 2005 Paris Declaration, the members of the Sahel Alliance pool their resources and their modes of operation. The countries of the G-5 Sahel and the Alliance work, *inter alia*, on facilities dedicated to crisis regions, using adapted procedures; the allocation of budgetary support resources to address security shocks; multisectoral approaches in hotbeds of tensions; strengthening local stakeholders and recruiting the best actors to work on the ground.

At the request of Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel, focus has been placed in recent months on projects in the most vulnerable areas. The G-5 permanent secretariat decided to launch, as a matter of urgency, rapid-impact projects as part of the emergency programme for the stabilization of the G-5 Sahel in the three border areas in the west, centre and east where the G-5 Sahel Joint Force intervenes. These priority projects meet the following three criteria. They are located in sensitive cross-border areas, as identified by the G-5; they address specific sectoral issues, including water, the resilience of populations affected by crises and the rebuilding of social fabric; and they seek to record genuine

achievements by the end of 2018. The European Union and its member States have played a driving role in conducting the emergency development programmes. At the Nouakchott conference, on 6 December, the members of the Sahel Alliance contributed €266 million to these emergency development projects.

In sum and in conclusion, the Sahel Alliance plays a powerful, operational and integrated role by fostering synergies between its each of its members in the framework of a close partnership with the G-5 Sahel permanent secretariat. We are seeking to demonstrate our collective capacity by implementing projects with tangible results that are achieved quickly in areas that are very unstable with the aim of benefiting the most vulnerable populations.

We are especially proud to have worked with the UNDP since the launching of the Alliance, which steers the sectoral governance group, which is key to the success of all of our work in the Sahel. More recently, the Alliance was honoured to host the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. The members of the Sahel Alliance have worked closely with the G-5 Sahel countries to actively contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. The links with peacebuilding and the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations are crucial to the Alliance. Our goals are closely linked and dialogue has been established at the highest possible level. We must work together on the priority interests of the Sahel, its security and its development.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Rioux for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members wishing to make statements.

**Mrs. Gueguen** (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Côte d'Ivoire for having made the Sahel a priority of its Security Council presidency. We strongly support that choice because we are convinced that the challenges facing the Sahel region call for an ambitious and coordinated response by the international community within the framework of the priorities set by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

I thank the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw; the Chair

of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Ion Jinga; the Vice President of the World Bank for Africa, Mr. Hafez Ghanem; and the representative of the Sahel Alliance, the Director General of the Agence Française de Développement, Mr. Rémy Rioux, for their briefings, which illustrate the extent of international mobilization in support of the Sahel that exists today. They also show how complementary and coordinated the respective actions of the various stakeholders on the ground are. France is convinced that our collective commitment to the stabilization of the Sahel must necessarily be based on joint action on the political, security and development pillars.

First and foremost is the political pillar, for there can be no lasting stabilization in the Sahel without the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which is becoming increasingly urgent. The Security Council has established a robust framework to support the Malian parties in that regard, in accordance with the terms of the Peace Agreement itself. Recent progress, including the effective launch of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, is encouraging but must be further consolidated. We believe that the international community must use all those levers by the March deadline set by resolution 2432 (2018). The sanctions adopted a few minutes ago against three individuals obstructing the implementation of the Peace Agreement are a case in point. They mark an important moment in time — the international community is taking concrete action against those who seek to prevent peace in order to continue to prosper at the expense of the general population. Those measures will be complemented by other such measures in the future, if necessary.

Secondly, we must consider the security pillar — because there can be no stability in the Sahel without a merciless fight against the terrorist groups that threaten the populations and the stability of the States of the region. In that regard, we must continue to enhance the partnerships among the various security forces deployed in Mali and the Sahel — national armies, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force, Operation Barkhane and the European missions — each of which has its own added value and all of which pursue the same strategic objective.

It is also our responsibility to strengthen multilateral support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force,

which is an innovative and sustainable response by the G-5 States against a threat to international peace and security whose causes and implications extend beyond their subregion. As the Council recalled in its press statement of 15 November (SC/13584), the Joint Force must now continue its operations while building on the funding already disbursed, which will allow the Council to review its international support in the near future.

Finally, with regard to the development pillar, there can be no stability in the Sahel without the creation of sustainable prospects for the people of the Sahel, and in particular for its youth. We all must act within the framework established in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which is intended to serve as a compass in order to avoid any dilution or duplication of effort. In that regard, we welcome the work carried out in recent months to update and revitalize that Strategy, particularly under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Sahel Alliance is fully in line with the guidelines set by that shared framework. It is a space for coordination among major donors that aims to deliver aid in a faster, better coordinated and more targeted way to the most vulnerable populations, including in areas that have proven difficult to access for development. That effort can be successful only in close coordination with the Sahel countries, because a development strategy devised exclusively in the northern capitals will not succeed. That is why, in early December in Nouakchott, the Sahel Alliance announced that it would provide €1.3 billion in funding for the G-5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme, which was created and designed by experts on the Sahel. Of that sum, €266 million has been set aside for projects set to begin right away in the Joint Force's most vulnerable regions of operation.

The United Nations has a central role to play on each of those elements by ensuring the coherence and effectiveness of everyone's engagement. That includes coordinated action by all actors in the United Nations system in efforts ranging from prevention to peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The Peacebuilding Commission has a major role to play in strengthening that integrated approach. It can help to strengthen coordination among the different pillars of the United Nations system, but also among the United Nations, the region, Governments and societies in the Sahel. We hope that the Commission will continue to mobilize on



the Sahel issue, as it did a few weeks ago at its annual session. I would also like to welcome the increasing and especially relevant and useful involvement of the Peacebuilding Fund in the countries of the Sahel.

France will continue to raise the various aspects of the issue of the stabilization of the Sahel in the Security Council. The permanent link between our political, security and development efforts is essential in that regard. The Council can count on our determination to provide responses to the challenges facing the region. That responsibility falls on us all.

**Mr. Hunter** (United States of America): We thank all of the briefers today for their presentations and for their work to advance peace and development in the Sahel.

We share the Special Adviser's assessment that the Sahel is an important and culturally diverse region filled with potential, but that its people today face a daunting set of challenges. We also agree that competition over natural resources in the region, exacerbated by natural disasters including desertification and drought, contribute to the instability that we see today. We are particularly concerned by the increasing unrest in the central Sahel, driven by the scarcity of resources. Those communities are increasingly seeing those disputes through an ethnic lens, and each side brands the other as the enemy.

In the face of all of those challenges, the United States continues its multisectoral partnerships with the Governments and societies of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to bolster stability and security by providing them humanitarian, health, agriculture, governance and development assistance. The United States provided more than \$460 million in the 2017 fiscal year in development and humanitarian assistance to programmes in the G-5 Sahel countries. All of our support seeks to complement the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the creative partnerships envisioned in its Support Plan. We particularly appreciate the emphasis on unlocking the potential of the private sector in the Sahel as an additional way to harness the power of youth in a positive way.

The efforts of the United Nations to attract and align international support for priority challenges in the Sahel is crucial. In particular, we should continue to support priorities and activities that are Africa-driven. We therefore commend the recent success of the G-5

Sahel donor and partner coordination conference in Nouakchott on 6 December, with its focus on each of the four pillars of the G-5 Sahel — security, governance, resilience and infrastructure — and towards the projects of highest priority, greatest cross-border impact and maximum chance of success.

A key component of American efforts to support resilience in the Sahel is to provide women and youth with access to economic and civic empowerment. Women are the world's safest borrowers, as they pay back microloans at a rate of 97 per cent. In addition, women business owners create a multiplier effect in their communities. They are more likely to hire other women and to reinvest in their communities and their families. Women and youth often face high barriers to accessing commercial activities, including finance — such as legal and regulatory environments, educational gaps and social and cultural norms.

The United States is actively engaged in addressing those issues in the Sahel. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is working to build stronger connections in the Sahel between the programmes it funds in food security, health, micro-enterprise and community development. By way of example, in the Niger, USAID is engaging women and young people in community dialogues and local decision-making to prevent violent extremism from taking root in vulnerable communities. By engaging women across their many roles as mothers, teachers, civil society actors and business leaders we can focus resources more constructively to address the drivers of violent extremism, combat radicalization and keep our communities safe.

On security, the United States commends the G-5 Sahel member States for operationalizing the G-5 Sahel Joint Force to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime — a primary contributor to regional instability. The United States strongly supports the Joint Force in its efforts to establish lasting security. We will continue to work closely with all partners to coordinate our contributions of much-needed equipment, training and technical advice to G-5 Sahel member States to fill the prioritized capability gaps of the Joint Force.

Nevertheless, security responses alone will not solve the problem if there is no progress in addressing the political, environmental, development and humanitarian challenges in the region. Only by promoting good governance, addressing the root

causes of instability, creating economic opportunity, respecting human rights and enhancing security can the States in the region make sustainable progress towards addressing those challenges. Their progress, combined with the support efforts of bilateral and multilateral partners — all working in a complementary fashion with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel — will be critical to realizing the vast potential of the region and its peoples.

**Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren** (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank Côte d'Ivoire for having organized this briefing in a timely fashion. I also wish to thank all speakers for their briefings.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands wishes to emphasize the following three points: first, the need for an integrated and coordinated approach to the issue of the Sahel; secondly, the need to combat climate change, water stress and other root causes of conflict, in keeping with the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel; and, thirdly, the need to build a lasting peace in the region through an approach that includes women and young people.

First, regarding the need for an integrated and coordinated approach in the context of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, I would like to recall that the shock waves of the instability in the Sahel reach far beyond the region, even to the shores of Europe. Real, long-term solutions are crucial in order to respond to this issue. That is why the Kingdom of the Netherlands truly appreciates the positive approach of the Support Plan, which focuses on opportunities more than difficulties. Consistency and coordination are crucial to acting in the six priority areas of the Plan.

We support the efforts of the Special Adviser, Ibrahim Thiaw, and his team to ensure the consistent implementation of the Strategy and the Support Plan. It is particularly important to bolster coordination and consistency among development and security stakeholders. The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore welcomes the recent Group of Five for the Sahel conference in Niamey, as well as the donor conference in Nouakchott, focusing on the development pillars of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

During those meetings, local and international stakeholders underscored the importance of taking into consideration the link between security and development in building a lasting peace in the Sahel. Gaining the confidence of local populations, fully

respecting human rights and strengthening national judicial systems in this regard are absolutely crucial undertakings. We would also underscore that an integrated approach is necessary not only at the regional level but also at the national and local levels. In that context, we would particularly encourage the Secretary-General to continue work on the drafting of an integrated strategic framework for Mali, as stipulated in the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

My second point is on combating climate change, water stress and other root causes of conflicts. It is right that the Support Plan focuses as a priority on strengthening resilience and the management of climate-related security risks. The Sahel is one of the regions in the world worst affected by the pernicious effects of climate change and water stress. Climate change knows no borders, and, to counter it, we need to also take that approach. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has always been in favour of a joint approach in terms of risk assessment and risk management strategies, as can be seen in the statements made by the President of the Council on, inter alia, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and the mandate of MINUSMA.

During the Arria Formula meeting on water, peace and security held in October, the instrument that was presented was aimed at using such risk assessments to develop responses that take into consideration conflicts and climate in Mali and elsewhere. A key role has been accorded the Special Adviser, Mr. Thiaw, and his team, in translating such assessments into programmes that take account of conflicts and climate in order to strengthen resilience in the region.

Thirdly, we commend the inclusive approach of the support plan vis-à-vis women and young people. The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the close link between the Support Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As we have already underscored, the programme is a prevention tool par excellence. Ensuring lasting means of subsistence is crucial to build a lasting peace.

It is often women and children who pay the heaviest price during conflict, and this is particularly true in the Sahel, which has the youngest population in the world. Women and young people therefore must be effectively

involved in the implementation of the Support Plan and have a voice in the decisions taken regarding them.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands expresses its support for the Special Adviser, Mr. Thiaw, in the implementation of the Support Plan and its six priorities. We urge the Council to continue to support these efforts in order to make possible the full implementation of the Plan through a consistent and inclusive approach that is focused on the root cause of the problem.

**Mr. Esono Mbengono** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Equatorial Guinea wishes to thank Côte d'Ivoire for having convened this meeting, which is being held exactly one day after we marked the fourth anniversary of the creation of the Group of Five for the Sahel. There can be no doubt that, since the creation of that institutional framework for coordination and follow-up of regional cooperation, the Sahelo-Saharan countries have done important work in pooling efforts in the areas of development and security in order to expeditiously usher in an area of overall progress and shared prosperity.

We also wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the presence of, and the detailed briefings provided by, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw; the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Ion Jinga; the World Bank Vice-President for Africa, Mr. Hafez Ghanem; and Mr. Rioux of the Sahel Alliance.

In recent years, the countries of the Sahel region have found themselves in the midst of a security crisis following an influx of terrorists and criminal forces of all stripes, and the peoples of the region are finding their very existence under threat. To eradicate that phenomenon, the States of the region, supported by various partners, have waged a battle that has essentially focused on the military aspect. However, we have gradually realized that there is a need to ensure that focus is not only on security but also on development, so as to address the root causes of the instability in the Sahel.

The Sahel region has a strategy that is based on development and security, as is made clear in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel. The political and security arenas cannot be dissociated from the humanitarian dimensions of development if we wish to build and sustain peace in the region.

In this connection, the Government of Equatorial Guinea welcomes the concerted efforts of the United Nations system as a whole aimed at recalibrating the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and further promoting its implementation through a more integrated and cross-cutting approach. Such endeavours will undoubtedly contribute to mobilizing additional resources for the Sahel and ensure that the assistance provided by the international community is properly coordinated and complementary to the efforts already under way in the countries of the region.

For that reason, the countries of the region, in particular those of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), have elaborated and adopted a programme called the Priority Investment Program, which includes some 40 projects directly related to living conditions in the Sahel. We deem the Program very relevant, as, for obvious reasons, much more has been done in the area of security owing to the need to combat violent extremism and negative forces that sow the seeds of despair. However, we believe that the development dimension must be bolstered so that the peoples of the Sahel can feel truly protected. It is clear that on any of the Sahel borders, specific achievements need to be recorded in terms of bolstering social welfare. That is what the Program must focus on.

In this connection, the region's partners must respect their financing commitments. We underscore the importance of the support provided by the European Investment Bank, which, at the G-5 Sahel partners and donors coordination conference held on 6 December in Nouakchott, confirmed its support for the following two areas of action in particular: infrastructure projects and projects related to resilience and human development. Such a large-scale strategic approach clearly reflects the region's partners in the Program's ability to significantly change the socioeconomic situation in the region.

In conclusion, we reiterate that the development dimension should not be forgotten in the Sahel because it will serve to sustainably address terrorist threats. We hope that tangible achievements will be made in the coming years and that they will bring about a positive transformation in the Sahel and offer a better future to all of its peoples, without exclusion. It should be underscored that achieving stability and peace in the Sahel will have a positive impact on the entire African continent.

**Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, which builds upon yesterday's discussions on drug trafficking, governance, organized crime and the rule of law in West Africa (see S/PV.8433). I would also like to thank all of the briefers who spoke today: Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Mr. Hafez Ghanem and Mr. Rémy Rioux, as well as our dear colleague Ambassador Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania.

The date of 30 June 2017 was a historic day for the country of the current presidency of the Security Council because it witnessed the closure of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire. That allowed the country to start a new chapter in its history. Since then, Côte d'Ivoire has made considerable progress towards sustainable peace, stability and economic prosperity.

The closure of any peacekeeping mission does not mean the end of the conflict. Instead, it means the beginning of action towards achieving long-term sustainable development, which is an important element in preventing a relapse into conflict. We therefore stress the importance of implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, under the supervision of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed. The Strategy is a comprehensive approach in support of regional development and aims to achieve peace and prosperity as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Strategy also supports capacity-building. In that regard, we urge Mr. Thiaw and Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, to make every effort to ensure that the goals of the Strategy are met. We look forward to reviewing the outcome of their efforts in the upcoming reports of the Secretary-General.

The State of Kuwait believes in the importance of development as a way to prevent conflict, and we work bilaterally with several African countries to fund their development projects. We also enjoy close relations with West African countries, especially in the context of developing their infrastructure. Through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Kuwait has funded several African projects in the amount of approximately \$439 million since 2015. The projects were conducted in various areas, including improving health-care facilities, roads and airports as well as developing water supply systems.

We welcome the steps taken by regional organizations in Africa. We appreciate their efforts to develop strategies that target sustainable development. They include Agenda 2063 of the African Union, as well as the priority investment plan of the Group of Five for the Sahel. Regional cooperation is a fundamental element in attracting the support of the international community. I take this opportunity to welcome the efforts of the Peacebuilding Commission, whose annual session, held on 12 November, focused on peacebuilding in the Sahel. There is a need to enhance coordination among the various stakeholders that offer development support in the region in order to guarantee success in all the efforts being made.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the efforts being made by all of the countries in the region, as well as by United Nations agencies, especially since they work in an unstable environment that has witnessed a tangible increase in the level of instability and insecurity. There is an urgent need to combat emerging terrorist threats in West Africa while at the same time focusing on intensifying efforts to establish peacebuilding. A holistic approach is the best way to address the various challenges posing a threat to the region.

**Mr. Tenya** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting and for the useful briefings by Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Ambassador Ion Jinga, Mr. Hafez Ghanem and Mr. Rémy Rioux.

Peru remains concerned about the ongoing deterioration in the level of security and the fragile humanitarian situation in the Sahel, in particular on the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. We deplore the spread of violent extremism and transnational organized crime and condemn ongoing terrorist attacks. We believe that it is imperative to address the manifold and complex challenges that lie in the root causes. Political crises, inequality, the lack of access to basic services, the effects of climate change, lack of opportunities, population growth and the presence of criminal organizations have all created a breeding ground for conflict in the region.

In that context, we wish to highlight the important role played by the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and other committed actors, as well as the need for the international

community to provide predictable and sustainable funding. In addition, and within the framework of a multidimensional and integrated strategy, we believe that it is essential to build and strengthen capacity and the institutions required to defend human rights and promote the rule of law and sustained economic growth, which is all consistent with the sustaining peace approach, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The various efforts, initiatives and mechanisms deployed on the ground must remain consistent at the political and operational levels. To that end, we highlight the role played by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel as the comprehensive framework for promoting greater coherent and integrated international support to meet national and regional needs and priorities, in line with resolution 2391 (2017).

We also underscore the establishment of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel as an instrument fostering greater efficiency and results under the Integrated Strategy. It is encouraging that the Plan is designed on the basis of six priority areas that cover the root causes of conflict in the region in greater detail. We would like to stress the importance of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and of creating greater employment opportunities, in particular for young people. Women and young people are called upon to play a central role in building a better future for their societies.

We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in implementing the Strategy, in close coordination with the countries of the Sahel, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the G-5 Sahel and financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank. We also highlight the role of the Peacebuilding Fund in implementing projects aimed at achieving sustainable peace in the Sahel within the framework of the United Nations Integrated Strategy.

I would like to conclude by stressing the need for the international community to continue to support the Integrated Strategy and its Support Plan in order to address the critical situation in the Sahel.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Special Adviser Thiaw, Ambassador Jinga, Mr. Ghanem, Vice-President of the World Bank for Africa, and Mr. Rioux for their respective briefings.

The Sahel is generally stable and has seen continued economic growth. Meanwhile, terrorism, transnational organized crime, poverty and imbalances in development and other issues threaten peace and development in the region. Addressing such problems will require greater input and a holistic approach from the international community. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan are important documents for building peace and achieving development in the region. With regard to peacebuilding in the Sahel, I would like to elaborate on the following points.

First, it is important to seek a political settlement to regional hotspot issues so as to achieve regional stability and create the conditions for peacebuilding and long-term development. While upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and respecting the sovereignty of the countries concerned, the international community should actively support countries in the Sahel in their efforts to promote peace and national reconciliation. We should continue to support the Malian parties concerned in expediting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and pay attention to the spillover effect on the Sahel of issues outside the region, such as the Libyan crisis, so as to minimize their negative impact.

Secondly, we need to help countries in the region accelerate development and address the root causes of conflict. The international community needs to honour its aid commitments, respect the leadership and ownership of countries in the Sahel, help them implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, formulate development strategies suited to their own national conditions and improve their own capabilities for self-reliant development. The Peacebuilding Commission can play a coordinating role to that end, while relevant international development agencies should continue their efforts to help countries in the region.

Thirdly, we should assist countries in the region in upgrading their security capabilities to ensure the implementation of peacebuilding efforts. The countries of the region have been actively engaged in security cooperation and, through the formation of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), they have taken the initiative to counter regional security threats, such as terrorism and transnational organized crime. China commends all such efforts. We

hope that the international community and the United Nations will respect the ownership and leadership of African countries in seeking their own solutions to African issues and actively support and help countries of the region build security capabilities and collectively address regional security threats.

Fourthly, priority should be given to cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the G-5 Sahel, as well as to improved coordination with relevant Sahel initiatives. The international community should strengthen communication and coordination with the countries of the Sahel and the relevant regional and subregional organizations, so that country-specific and regional strategies, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the United Nations Support Plan are organically combined to showcase their respective strengths and form synergies.

China has always been supportive of African countries, including those in the Sahel, in their pursuit of peace and development. In September this year, the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation defined peace, security and economic development as the focus of future China-Africa cooperation. China supports Africa's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. Together with the international community and the countries of the region, China will continue to support the Sahel to achieve lasting peace and common prosperity and contribute its share to the cause of peace and development in Africa.

**Mr. Lewicki** (Poland): Let me start by thanking Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, for his briefing. I would also like to thank his team for its outstanding work. Allow me to also thank Ambassador Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Mr. Hafez Ghanem, Vice-President of the World Bank for Africa, and Mr. Rémy Rioux, Chief Executive Officer of the French Development Agency, for their valuable contributions to today's debate.

The root causes of conflicts in many countries of the region are similar and interdependent. The challenges they face are cross-border in nature. In that context, cooperation among neighbouring countries and regional organizations is crucial. Cross-border threats in the

Sahel require transnational responses. We commend the ever-greater role of regional organizations in improving effective cooperation among Sahel countries. We welcome the adoption of a regional strategy and continue to work on subregional strategies. However, much remains to be done and the obstacles that need to be overcome are diverse and complex. The Sahel is also a high priority for the European Union. It has mobilized support in the amount of €4 billion over the period from 2014 to 2018 in order to address the various challenges faced by the region, including with regard to resilience, access to basic social services, climate change, social cohesion, stability and conflict prevention.

We welcome the positive developments in Côte d'Ivoire, a member of the Security Council. Thanks to its return to peace, security and stability, it has gained more importance in the subregion and in the community of nations. We hope that Côte d'Ivoire will seize that opportunity to maintain and even reinforce its active role in the challenging process of restoring peace and stability in the Sahel region.

We remain deeply concerned about the multifaceted challenges in the Sahel. The spread of insecurity and terrorism to other parts of the region, including into eastern Burkina Faso, is particularly worrisome. Terrorism continues to have devastating effects on lives and livelihoods, thereby depriving entire communities of access to basic social services, as well as to long-term opportunities and prospects. Winning the hearts and minds of a population is crucial in the fight against terrorism. Addressing violent extremism and terrorism with security measures is essential but must be supported by a broader political and institutional framework that can guide operations, be aligned with the regional strategy and help to translate strategic decisions into operations and tactical measures.

In that context, the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel should promote the comprehensiveness or adequacy of regional and subregional initiatives. The opportunity must also be seized to create a platform of cooperation aimed at ensuring wider respect for international law and standards, including human rights law and international humanitarian law because, as our leaders acknowledged in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, peace and security, development and human rights are the three interconnected and mutually reinforcing pillars of the United Nations. We must address all three pillars if we want to address stability and peace over the long-term.

The lack of good governance, neglect by States, underdevelopment, socioeconomic exclusion and inequalities, exacerbated by climate change and population growth, remain at the core of instability in the region. It goes without saying that a military solution alone is not enough to maintain lasting peace and stability. In that regard, a successful outcome for the Malian peace process remains the cornerstone of stabilization efforts in the region. Moreover, scaling up access to basic services and job opportunities in Mali, as well as in other countries in the region, is necessary for reducing the dependence on humanitarian assistance, as outlined in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan.

In conclusion, we must strengthen the nexus between security, development and human rights actions to ensure long-term stability in the Sahel. Doing so would require unity of purpose and adequate resources. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) and its Support Plan for the Sahel provide a comprehensive framework to strengthen good governance, security, development and respect for human rights in the Sahel region.

Finally, let me express our full support for the Special Representative for West Africa and the Special Adviser for the Sahel for their efforts aimed at spearheading the implementation of UNISS and its Support Plan so as to ensure continued United Nations support for the Sahel region.

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Sahel, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw; the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, our colleague the Permanent Representative of Romania, Mr. Ion Jinga; and all the other briefers for their interesting presentations.

We cannot fail to agree with the briefers that in recent years the Sahel countries have continued to face increased challenges to their stability and security, which have obviously had an impact on their ability to overcome the numerous socioeconomic and other difficulties they face. We note that despite the efforts made, extremism and terrorism are unfortunately now affecting new countries there. Combating these dangerous phenomena is a top priority for the region. Accordingly, we deem it extremely timely that efforts have been made by Sahel States to counter growing

threats. We support the regional initiative to establish the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

These threats of course undermine political stabilization and progress in solving socioeconomic problems. Therefore, efforts to foster security and stability must be made in the framework of a comprehensive approach combining military and counter-terrorism measures, strengthening State institutions and systemic economic and social development, enhancing efforts to spread of a culture of respect for human rights and the rule of law, and promoting job creation for young people.

We highly commended the work of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations specialized agencies in providing broad assistance to countries on the African continent. It is crucial that these efforts be made in close coordination with regional organizations, such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and others.

A positive role in mobilizing support for the Sahel region is also being played by the Peacebuilding Commission. We consider it important to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. In our opinion, its potential has not yet been fully exploited. In implementing the Strategy, the opinion of those countries for which it has been developed is very important.

We agree with those who have convened today's meeting that the numerous assistance programmes for the region need to be duly coordinated. The effectiveness of this coordination will depend on whether the structures already in place — first and foremost, those of the United Nations system — are adhering to their remit and upholding the principle of division of labour. In our opinion, it is only through collective, targeted efforts that are undertaken in the appropriate format and do not create a conflict of competences that we can achieve the desired result.

The most important thing for us is that external assistance not turn into an imposition of blanket prescriptions using medicine that is alien to African States. All external interference should be excluded. We are all well aware that had there not been a violent coup d'état in Libya in 2011, organized from the outside, perhaps we would not have to take up the difficult processes that are occurring in the region to a large extent because of it.

**Mr. Orrenius Skau** (Sweden): Let me also thank Special Adviser Thiaw, Ambassador Jinga, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and Mr. Ghanem and Mr. Rioux for sharing their valuable perspectives with the Security Council this afternoon.

We fully recognize the immense security challenges that the countries of the Sahel are facing, including the security situation in Mali and its implications for the region, as well as organized crime and terrorism. We commend regional initiatives to address the situation, including through the G5 Sahel joint force and the Multinational Joint Task Force. Let me underline in this regard the importance of Mali moving forward on implementing the Peace Agreement and for the Council to actively support these efforts. I am therefore glad to announce that the first listing of spoilers of the Peace Agreement was adopted just over an hour ago in the Sanctions Committee.

But this is not only about narrowly defined security concerns. The countries in the Sahel face many interconnected challenges, including inequalities, poverty, lack of basic services, weak institutions, gender-based violence, climate change and increasing conflict between farmers and herders. A comprehensive approach is needed to address this broad set of challenges and the root causes of conflict. We therefore welcome the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, as well as the adoption of a United Nations Support Plan, as a vital step to deliver on this strategy. It offers an opportunity to now gather partners and operationalize, as well as coordinate, across frameworks that are already in place.

We commend the Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), and Special Adviser Thiaw for their leadership and continued commitment to this important effort. Given the important role of regional, local and national actors, we further welcome steps taken by the African Union (AU) to revise its own strategy for the region, and, in this regard, we also reiterate our strong support for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is important that regional efforts, as well as efforts of other important partners, are well coordinated within the framework of the new United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

Despite the immense challenges, we agree with the Special Adviser that it is important to focus on the strong potential and the many opportunities that the

region offers. This was also evident during the recent visit by our Special Envoy for the Sahel, together with Special Adviser Thiaw, to the Liptako-Gourma region. For example, young people are energetic, dynamic and an asset for the promotion of development. Efforts should therefore be made to build and capitalize on these and other opportunities.

Accordingly, we welcome the Support Plan's focus on climate-smart agriculture and renewable energy, as well as on inclusive growth and empowerment of women and young people. It is also very important to strengthen the social contract between States and people of the Sahel countries, which includes improving trust in security actors, investing in the provision of basic social services and fully respecting human rights.

In July, our Foreign Minister took part in the joint AU-United Nations mission to the region, with a focus on women, peace and security, followed by a briefing to the Council (see S/PV.8306). The debate organized on climate-related security risks that same month (see S/PV.8307) also placed a particular emphasis on the challenges in the Sahel.

Throughout our Council tenure, we have advocated a comprehensive, regional approach to the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin regions, encompassing security, development and full respect for human rights. We are also contributing on the ground, in line with the priorities of the integrated strategy. In June, we increased our support for climate- and security-related efforts in the Sahel, with approximately €40 million, for the period from 2018 to 2021, in addition to already existing bilateral and humanitarian support, as well as support provided through the European Union. Within the strategy, Sweden's substantive multi-year, unearmarked contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme and United Nations Fund for Population Activities are creating flexibility and sustainability in this support.

Sustainable peace is best pursued in broad partnership, including with Governments, regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. It is crucial that all efforts undertaken by partners seek to align with the integrated strategy and to enhance inclusive local, national and regional ownership. Efforts should also



encompass all segments of society, including removing obstacles to women's inclusion. Continued political dialogue with Governments on long-term sustainable development models is also crucial.

Having the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission participate in this meeting is, in our view, very useful. The PBC, with its convening power, plays a pivotal role in a coordinated and coherent approach to the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy and its Support Plan for the Sahel, as recognized by the Council through presidential statement S/PRST/2018/3, on UNOWAS. We hope that that practice can be further built upon.

Finally, going forward, we would welcome regular written updates by the Special Adviser or UNOWAS on the implementation process of the United Nations Support Plan. Updates on project timelines, proposed trust funds and coordination efforts would be important to include in such reporting. The successful implementation of the Sahel Strategy would be an important step towards stabilizing a rather volatile region. The Strategy and the Support Plan must have continued, strong, unified, international and United Nations support, including from the Council.

**Mr. Temenov** (Kazakhstan): We commend the presidency for putting the spotlight on a comprehensive approach to building and sustaining peace in the Sahel region. The delegation of Kazakhstan would also like to thank Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel; Mr. Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; Mr. Hafez Ghanem; and Mr. Rémy Rioux for their insightful briefings.

We would like to commend the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, other countries of the region and regional and subregional actors, as well as the World Bank and international donors, for their efforts to strengthen peace and security throughout the region. We also praise Mr. Thiaw and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Chambas for advancing the recalibration of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

We support strengthened regional and subregional cooperation, which is extremely vital in order to have an effective impact. Such collaborative efforts have yielded the latest positive political and economic developments that we have witnessed in Sahel countries. At the same time, several challenges continue to affect

stability in the region. The security situation continues to deteriorate owing to the further spread of terrorist and extremist groups. That insecurity is further aggravated by the alliance of those groups with actors involved in transnational organized crime and drug and human trafficking, as well as arms proliferation in the region. The effects of climate change, food insecurity, forced displacement, rapid population growth and weak governance also add to the complexity of the situation.

Kazakhstan is a strong proponent of the three-pronged strategy to achieve regional peace and stability through: first, strengthening the security-development nexus; secondly, adopting a regional approach; and, thirdly, streamlining the United Nations system to deliver as one. While we welcome the United Nations reform on repositioning the development system with greater coordination among the various relevant United Nations agencies at the country level, we now have to go further and increase coordination at the regional level to advance peace and development on a comprehensive and efficient basis. Such a comprehensive overall strategy would prove to be a most effective and sustainable tool to address common threats facing the Sahel and neighbouring countries. In our view, the recently calibrated United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel and the reviewed African Union Strategy for the Sahel Region will form a robust and comprehensive framework that will embrace all the measures needed to achieve peace and prosperity in the Sahel. We call on all stakeholders to make every effort to implement those strategies. Let me focus on some issues that we believe are important for the overall success of those strategies.

The first concerns the joint regional counter-terrorism efforts through the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We welcome increased national and regional ownership in addressing the threat posed by terrorism and extremism, and support the full operationalization of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. In order to succeed, there is a need for the unanimous political support of the Security Council, increased technical assistance from Member States and predictable and long-term sustainable funding. In turn, the G5-Sahel States should strengthen coordination and complementarity between the Joint Force and other security forces in the region, including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization

Mission in Mali, and ensure that operations are better aligned with broader regional initiatives.

Secondly, we share the assessment of Special Adviser Thiaw that, in order to effectively address instability in the region, any military approach and humanitarian assistance should go hand in hand in addressing the root causes of conflict and development efforts in an integrated, complex and well-coordinated manner, reinforced by long-term sustainable funding. Our efforts need to focus on the structural drivers of instability by decreasing poverty, providing basic services, creating better opportunities for education and employment, strengthening local governance and mitigating the impact of climate change. We therefore strongly support United Nations peacebuilding programmes, as well as all the regional and international efforts aimed at building resilience in human and environmental systems and increasing peace and prosperity in the region. We commend in particular the Alliance for the Sahel initiative for launching development and rapid-impact projects aimed at creating new jobs and supporting rural areas with improved infrastructure and services.

Finally, we underscore the importance of preventing the radicalization of young women and men by investing in education and employment and promoting the meaningful inclusion of women and youth in political and development processes. In that regard, we welcome the convening of the first annual Youth Regional Forum for Peace and Security, held in Ouagadougou this month, and call on all parties to redouble their efforts to strengthen the role of young people in the consolidation of peace and security in the Sahel.

In joining multilateral action, Kazakhstan therefore remains committed to assisting the Sahel countries to fulfil their vision for peace, progress and prosperity. We will continue to work together with the Council and key actors to find a solution for achieving lasting peace in the region.

**Mr. Woldeyes** (Ethiopia): We thank Côte d'Ivoire for putting this important item on the agenda of the Security Council. We also wish thank Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel; Ambassador Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; Mr. Hafez Ghanem, the World Bank's Vice-President for Africa; and Mr. Rémy

Rioux, on behalf of the Alliance for the Sahel, for their respective briefings.

This meeting is taking place after the African Union Peace and Security Council held an open meeting on international and regional initiatives in the Sahel region a few days ago. We hope that our discussion here today will reinforce the important meeting that took place at the level of the African Union. We share the view that there is no shortage of strategies for the Sahel region. Numerous initiatives have been taken with the objective of overcoming peace, security and socioeconomic development challenges in the region. What emerged loud and clear during the African Union Peace and Security Council meeting was the need to ensure better coherence and political ownership by countries of the region and Africa in the stabilization efforts of the Sahel.

The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel is a widely accepted and comprehensive strategy for the promotion of long-lasting peace and security, reinforced by development for the people of the Sahel region. We therefore believe that the commitment by the international community within the framework of Integrated Strategy for the Sahel should be fulfilled. The need to strengthen support for achieving peace and development in the Sahel region remains a priority. We strongly believe that renewing the call for sustaining the flow of resources is important.

There is a worrisome trend that the problem of peace and security in the Sahel is expanding to the Lake Chad basin, which in turn is affected by multiple other challenges. Accordingly, a coordinated response to the problems of security and development of the Sahel will have a positive impact on mitigating that risk. In that regard, there is a need to build synergies at the national, regional and international levels, including with regard to the ongoing implementation of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, the review of the African Union Strategy for the Sahel Region and the implementation of the Priority Investment Programme of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

The restoration and expansion of State authority in northern Mali and remote areas of Sahelian countries, especially the G-5 Sahel countries, is absolutely critical. The absence of viable State structures has been a major obstacle to stability and development in the region. The threat and frequent attacks in recent months against security forces and other personnel

serving in State institutions, including the destruction of public facilities, must be addressed with the requisite seriousness.

The recent series of terrorist attacks are clear indications of the growing threat of terrorism and violent extremism, including those on the Libyan-Chadian border. Operationalizing the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel is part of addressing that tremendous challenge. However, without sustainable and stronger support to the Joint Force, and without strengthening the national security forces of countries of the region, not much progress can be made in defeating terrorism and organized crime. In that connection, reviving the Nouakchott process was underscored during the recent meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council.

We appreciate the commitments of the African Union, the European Union and bilateral partners in the context of addressing structural and operational gaps for implementation of the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Continuing partnerships on development aspects, especially in the implementation of the Priority Investment Plan for countries like Mali, remains strategic.

Finally, coordination among the United Nations agencies operating in the region, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union will be vital for the improvement of the humanitarian situation in the Sahel and the long-term development trajectory in the region. In that regard, it is important that access to basic services and job opportunities in the border areas be scaled up in the context of implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan. The private sector should also have a role to play in ensuring tangible progress in the socioeconomic development endeavours of the region.

**Mr. Hickey** (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Thiaw, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, for briefing us today. We are pleased to hear of the progress made to operationalize and deliver the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. He and his team deserve real credit for the 2018 Support Plan, which has rightly prioritized getting better coordination between agencies and improved buy-in from the Governments and peoples of the Sahel region.

As I think Mr. Thiaw's briefing has established, the Integrated Strategy has been through an important and

formative year. The Support Plan has helped highlight the need to realistic and targeted in our ambitions and serves as a reminder that, despite some very difficult challenges, the Sahel is also full of opportunities. The more that can be done to unlock the potential of the Sahel, particularly through support to education, jobs and family planning, the more we will see young entrepreneurs and young leaders finding local solutions to the challenges they face, including the challenges of climate change.

We are therefore delighted to see the international community and the United Nations system redoubling our efforts through the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, while seeking to learn from the challenges of the past five years and taking a more deliberative partnership approach with the countries and peoples of the region. The Security Council has previously discussed the risk of the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel seeming distant or disconnected from the realities of the region. We therefore welcome the increased focus on local engagement, particularly with girls and women.

Similarly, the past few years have shown the need to be realistic, patient and ensure that major pledges and announcements are matched with sufficient people, resources and capabilities to actually deliver in the region. That has not always been the case, and there is much more that could be done centrally from New York to ensure existing resources are fully mobilized and that coordination mechanisms in-country are working as effectively as possible. In particular, we would highlight the need to deploy the best people to the toughest problems in the region itself.

We also need to ensure that the development agenda is working closely with the other institutions and sectors, particularly those focused on defence and security. It is trite but true that there can be no development without stability, or vice versa. We would encourage more frequent and honest conversations between the development and security sectors in the Sahel. It is notable that West Africa, and the Sahel region in particular, is attracting ever-more international solidarity and support, which is absolutely right and arguably overdue. Nonetheless, we need to ensure that organizational mandates are clear and that strong lines of communication are set up between them.

The United Kingdom is in the process of expanding our diplomatic, defence and development assistance to the Sahel region. We believe that will enable us to

fully explore the links and opportunities and build up an approach that knits together our security, diplomatic development and humanitarian work. We are opening new Embassies in the Niger and Chad, increasing our presence in Mali and have already deployed three Chinook helicopters to provide logistical support to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel through Operation Barkhane.

We will also be significantly increasing our development assistance to the region in the coming years. We see an approach that joins up the immediate and life-saving aid to long-term development and security outcomes as critical to changing the Sahel's current trajectory. That demands United Nations leadership, and I am pleased to hear that the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel will be entering 2019 in a better state to deliver that.

**Mrs. Cordova Soria** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we should like to express our thanks to Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw for his briefing. We should also like to thank Ambassador Jinga, Mr. Ghanem and Mr. Rioux for their statements.

It is clear that the situation in the Sahel region is alarming and presents great challenges in the security, governance and development sectors. The region continues to face a volatile and complex environment that includes asymmetrical threats carried out by armed and terrorist groups and transnational crime that in turn includes trafficking in drugs, human beings and weapons, among other things. Those three factors put at risk not only the stability of the countries of the region, but also represent a threat to the political peace processes. As such, they represent a threat to the civilian population.

Bolivia has reiterated strongly the need to analyse, but above all identify, the structural causes of conflicts. In the specific case of the Sahel, those causes have had a profound impact on the current context of the region. We have mentioned it before, and we shall do so again: the consequences of interventionism and regime-change policies following the 2011 conflict in Libya unleashed the side effect of destabilization in the Sahel and brought about chaos, the disastrous results of which continue to be experienced to this day.

Unfortunately, in addition to the precarious security situation, the Sahel poses other great challenges. The humanitarian situation is the one that we should focus on more closely. According to

data provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, eight countries in the region are at risk of a humanitarian crisis, since, out of the 150 million inhabitants, approximately 24 million require humanitarian assistance and 10 million are at risk of food insecurity. In addition, there are more than 3 million refugees and forced displaced persons, not to mention the adverse effects of climate change, which further exacerbate the crisis in the region.

In turn, Mali and the Lake Chad basin represent the most significant hotspots in the region. In Mali, insecurity has intensified and clashes between armed groups, asymmetric attacks, cross-border influences and intercommunal violence have led to massive displacement, further undermining the humanitarian situation.

Despite the bleak outlook in the Sahel, we would like to emphasize the significant efforts of regional and subregional organizations, led by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. We welcome and commend the efforts and the considerable political will of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger in terms of cooperation and operationalization of their forces on the ground. The Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is a great and exemplary demonstration of the coordinated efforts of the African Union and the United Nations, as well as showing a high level of solidarity among member States and the international community in general.

We consider it essential that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, as part of the concept of operations approved under resolution 2359 (2017) and previously endorsed by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, generate once and for all the necessary capabilities for the full deployment of the military, police and civilian components. To that end, it is crucial that the countries that make up the Joint Force receive technical cooperation and predictable and sustainable funding.

Moreover, the commitments made at the conference held by the European Union and other countries in Brussels on 23 February are an encouraging sign for the capacity-building of the contingents of the Joint Force. All initiatives towards achieving stability and lasting peace in the region are critical. However, we are concerned that those funding pledges have not yet been fully fulfilled. We believe economic cooperation to be a responsibility towards the region due to the intrinsic links between the current context

and the interventionist policies to which we referred. It is therefore an unavoidable obligation that must be fully met.

On the other hand, it is essential to strengthen the programmes under the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which provide an overall framework aimed at strengthening governance, resilience and security in the countries of the region. The strengthening of those capacities in the countries of the region, and above all their ownership and decisiveness on the ground, is fundamental. The six priority areas of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, which focus on cross-border and regional cooperation to ensure complementarity and coordination among the countries of the region, should enable the joint efforts to mobilize expertise and financial resources. In that context, significant coordination among the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the African Union is crucial.

Finally, we draw attention to the critical and necessary humanitarian action in the Sahel. It has saved many lives, but millions of people still urgently need it. We call on and strongly encourage the international community to continue to support, through technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation, all initiatives for the people in the interest of achieving stability and sustainable peace in the region.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

I would like to thank Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, for his briefing on developments in the Sahel and the current initiatives to promote peace, stability and development. I also thank Mr. Rémy Rioux, Director-General of the French Development Agency, and Mr. Hafez Ghanem, Vice President of the World Bank for Africa, for their informative presentations on the need for enhanced cooperation among all actors in order to meet the multiple challenges facing the Sahel. I also thank Ambassador Ion Jinga for his briefing.

The Sahel today acts as a summary of the many challenges facing the West African subregion. The region has vast natural resources and significant human capital, comprising 65 per cent of young people, which should logically allow it to achieve sustainable economic and social development as a guarantee of

peace and stability. Unfortunately, security clashes, climate change, structural vulnerabilities and the lack of basic social services hamper development efforts in the region. The Sahel therefore reflects the false image of a vast arid and poor area, where State authority is barely evident, thereby fostering the proliferation of networks of drug traffickers and armed terrorist groups.

At the high-level debate on 5 December (see S/PV.8413), it was underlined that peace and security are inextricably linked to economic and social development. That challenge therefore reinforces the need to find lasting solutions to the current situation of instability in the Sahel and the entire West African region.

In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the recalibrated United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel with a view to ensuring coordinated and coherent efforts to address the underlying causes of instability in the Sahel. We would also like to express our support for the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel for the period 2018-2030. The Plan seeks to strengthen efforts to accelerate shared prosperity and sustainable peace in the region through the implementation of the priorities identified to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. My country welcomes the fact that the Sahel Support Plan is an instrument to promote coherence and coordination for greater effectiveness and to achieve results in the context of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

My country believes that it is necessary for the United Nations to improve its coordination and strengthen its collaboration with all partners in the region, in particular national and regional institutions, bilateral and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the Sahel Alliance, and civil society organizations. That is an essential condition for the implementation of the Security Council resolutions on the Sahel.

As the challenges in the Sahel are numerous and multifaceted, the security initiatives undertaken by the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the other forces present in the region do not represent sufficient and sustainable responses. They should necessarily be supported by the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the Sahel Support Plan. In that regard, it is important to highlight the crucial role of the World Bank and the Sahel Alliance, as well as other development partners, in funding

development projects that generate employment and opportunities for the empowerment of women, who play a key role in promoting and strengthening peace in the region.

In addition, the impacts of climate change on resource and land management, conflicts, population displacement and migration flows are considerable and require a concerted approach on our part to address the root causes of the instability in the Sahel. Given the numerous challenges, Côte d'Ivoire calls for a paradigm shift in the region. We must make our actions part of a long-term forward-looking vision, based on a relevant analysis of the aspirations of the populations concerned and development strategies, taking into account the socioeconomic environment of the countries of the Sahel region.

My country would like to commend the international community's concern over the Sahel. We call on the States of the region to take ownership of their collective security and economic and social development by implementing the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.

In conclusion, my country believes that the implementation of the Sahel Support Plan, which is based on the principle of mutual accountability, deserves the utmost attention of the Council and all development partners.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*