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THIRD MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF
SECURITY COOPERATION AND THE OPERATIONALISATION
OF THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN
THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION
NIAMEY, NIGER

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**SECOND PROGRESS REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
CONCLUSIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING HELD ON 17 MARS 2013 AND
PROSPECTS FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE NOUAKCHOTT PROCESS**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The first ministerial meeting on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan region, held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on 17 March 2013, agreed on a series of measures to address the security challenges faced by the region. It was particularly agreed that the appropriate Ministers would meet at least once every six months, while the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services would meet once every two months. The Conclusions of the Ministerial meeting of Nouakchott are attached as Annex. The Second Ministerial meeting was held in N'Djamena, on 11 September 2013. The Heads of Intelligence and Security Services met three times in between the two Ministerial meetings.

2. This report first presents a general overview of the situation in the region, before taking stock of the implementation of the Nouakchott Process. It concludes with Observations on the way forward.

II. OVERALL SITUATION IN THE SAHEL AND REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

3. The period under consideration was marked by significant progress in Mali, the Sahel country, whose situation was the greatest source of concern for the Regional and international institutions over the past two years. The process of restoring the constitutional order was successfully completed, with the organization of two rounds of Presidential election on 28 July and 11 August 2013, followed by the organization of Legislative elections on 24 November and 15 December 2013. The Presidential election, which was won by Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, took place in conditions deemed to be free and fair by all Election Observation Missions, including that of the AU. A remarkable act as the loser immediately conceded defeat even before the official results and congratulated the winner. The Parliamentary elections, whose first and second rounds were held on 24 November and 15 December 2013, were also considered to be free and fair by all election observation missions. The ruling party won the majority of seats in the Parliament, which has, since then, elected its Bureau and was ready to begin its work.

4. Since that time, the Malian authorities are endeavoring to consolidate the gains made. The efforts of the Malian Government should be supported especially as important challenges are still to be taken up, as evidenced, in particular, by the difficulties faced in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement of 18 June 2013, concluded with the armed groups of the North and the resumption by the terrorist groups of their attacks and hostage-taking, especially in the regions of Kidal and Gao.

5. The AU, particularly through its Mission to Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), established after the transformation, on 1 July 2013, of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) into a UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) actively supports the ongoing efforts in Mali. The AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, former President Pierre Buyoya, has actively participated in the

negotiations that led to the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement and is heavily involved in the monitoring of its implemented, in particular through the Follow up and Evaluation Committee and the Joint Technical Security Committee, established under the Agreement and chaired by the MINUSMA. The AU has also provided support to the organization of the Presidential election. Finally, through the Support and Follow up Group (SFG) on the Situation in Mali, which it co-chairs with the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the AU helps to mobilize the international community in support of Mali. The SFG held its 6th meeting in Bamako, on 2 November 2013.

6. After his election and within the framework of deepening relations of friendship and good neighborliness with neighboring countries, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita undertook, from 10 to 12 January 2014, a State visit to Mauritania. On that occasion, the Head of State of Mali and his Mauritanian counterpart, President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, welcomed the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali and the defeat of terrorist groups that operated in the North of the country. They agreed to enhance cooperation between the armed and security forces of the two countries through regular meetings, regular exchange of information and close cooperation between the Chiefs of Staff. The two leaders also agreed not to tolerate on their respective territories the presence of any armed or terrorist group, potentially destabilizing factor, for one or the other country. They called for increased cooperation between all the States of the Sahelo-Saharan Region to coordinate operations against the armed terrorist groups, drug traffickers and illegal trafficking of all kinds.

7. Furthermore, it is important to point out the initiative of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General of Mali and Head of MINUSMA to support, in close cooperation with the Government of Mali and other partners, including MISAHEL, the organization in Mali of a number of workshops to reactivate the implementation process of the Ouagadougou Agreement of 18 June 2013. In this regard, two workshops were organized in Bamako respectively on 13 and 14 February 2014, bringing together the representatives of the Government of Mali, the armed groups of the North, the civil society and experts who discussed the lesson learned from the past peace agreements as well as the issue of the cantonment of the armed groups of the North.

8. The Malian President also paid a friendly and working visit to Algeria on 18 and 19 January 2014. On that occasion, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika assured his Malian counterpart of the full readiness of Algeria to support Mali in its efforts to consolidate security and stability, to preserve the territorial integrity of the country and to reconcile all Malians through dialogue. In this regard and at the request of the Malian side, Algeria made efforts to contribute to the ongoing actions of the international community to promote an inclusive national dialogue, in all transparency, loyalty, efficiency, accountability and ownership by the Malians of this process, and in conformity with the various resolutions of the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC). They reaffirmed their commitment to the objectives of the AU and their commitment to pool efforts to promote peace, security, stability and development at the continental level. The two Heads of State also welcomed the cooperation that was developing and strengthening in the field of security both at bilateral level and the mechanisms put in place by the neighboring countries, the AU and the UN to fight against terrorism and organized crime.

9. The AU, alongside other members of the international community, supports the regional efforts aimed at address the challenges facing the Sahel-Saharan region. It is in this context that the MISAHEL was established, whose priority areas of action relate to the promotion of good governance, security cooperation, development issues and taking into account the gender dimension. To ensure a more effective contribution in these areas, a draft AU Strategy for the Sahel region has been developed, together with a Plan of Action, which is submitted to this meeting for consideration. As pointed out above, regional cooperation in the field of security is already materializing through the Nouakchott Process. It should also be pointed out the regular consultations that the High Representative of the AU for Mali and the Sahel holds with the regional leaders and the international actors concerned. In this respect and in line with the Conclusions of meetings of N'Djamena on the dispatch, as and when necessary, of missions to countries in the region to help promote and build confidence, the High Representative visited Mauritania, in October 2013, during which he held talks with President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz on the situation in the Sahel.

10. It should be pointed out that the United Nations had developed an Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, which encompasses, in a holistic approach, the security, the humanitarian dimension and development challenges in the region. On 16 July 2013, the Security Council welcomed that Strategy. The European Union (EU) has also developed a Strategy to guide its action in the Sahel region; it is being adjusted and harmonized with other initiatives. Similarly, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has made efforts in this area, and in the context of the overall objective to ensure greater coordination between all actors concerned.

11. For the purpose of better coordination of international efforts in the Sahel region, the Chairperson of the Commission, the UN Secretary General, the Presidents of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank, and the European Commissioner for Development undertook from 4 to 8 November 2013, a joint visit to Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. In the Conclusions of the Ministerial meeting on the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, held on 5 November 2013, in Bamako, it was agreed to put in place a Ministerial Coordination Platform, under the Chairmanship of Mali for the next two years and a Joint AU-UN Technical Secretariat, represented respectively by MISAHEL and the Bureau of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for West Africa based in Bamako. The staff of MISAHEL and the UN Bureau for West Africa prepared the Draft Terms of Reference of the Technical Secretariat and planned to convene a meeting in Bamako on 21 February 2014 to operationalise the Secretariat with the participation of other partners, like ECOWAS; the EU, AfDB, the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, in conformity with the recommendations of the Ministerial meeting.

12. The need for an efficient coordination of efforts and the different initiatives for the Sahel was stressed at the high level seminar organized by the European Union in Brussels on 6 February 2014, during which the participants commended MISAHEL and the UN Office for West Africa for the joint efforts made to establish the technical secretariat of the Coordination Platform for the Sahel. It should be noted that the responsibilities so far devolved upon the Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General for the Sahel were transferred officially on 17 February 2014 to the United Nations Office for West Africa.

III. ENHANCING SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION

13. As indicated above, the Nouakchott Ministerial meeting agreed on the convening of regular meetings between the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the countries of the region. To date, the Commission has organized three meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services. The first meeting was held in Bamako, on 18 April 2013, the second in Abidjan on 20 and 21 June 2013, the third in N'Djamena, on 10 September 2013, and the fourth, in the Niamey on 19 February 2014,. These meetings were an opportunity to exchange views on the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region, deepening of security cooperation between the countries concerned and national and regional capacity building to fight against terrorism and cross border crime. They proved to be a valuable tool for confidence building and also contributed to the promotion of cooperation between all the services concerned.

14. At their meeting in N'Djamena, the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services noted that while progress had been made in efforts to take up the security challenges the region faced, the situation, nevertheless, still remained a source of concern. Consequently, they stressed the need for continued vigilance and determined efforts to deepen security cooperation on the basis of a unified vision of collective security, transparency and shared responsibility.

15. Among the activities carried out to date as a follow-up of the meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services, it should be noted :

- (i) the Joint Consultative Mission undertaken by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services in Africa (CISSA) and the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL) to Libya from 3 to 5 September 2013, and the organization by the AU Commission, in cooperation with the Libyan Government of the Workshop on Operational Strengthening of Security at Land Borders in the Sahelo-Saharan Region, in Tripoli, on 4 and 5 September 2013. The Commission is endeavoring to ensure the necessary follow up;
- (ii) the production and dissemination of a special edition of the CAERT daily press review devoted to the Sahel region; and
- (iii) the transmission to countries in the region of relevant documents of the AU and ECOWAS related to the fight against terrorism, to facilitate the implementation of the relevant commitments contained therein.

16. The N'Djamena meeting also stressed the need to organize activities on capacity building identified by the ACSRT, as well as other training activities on the collection and analysis of intelligence information in the context of support to capacity building, with the facilitation by the AU Commission. In this regard, the ACSRT organized the following activities which have benefited the countries of the Nouakchott Process:

- (i) workshop for capacity building on the theme : " *International Best Practices of Criminal Justice in the Investigation and Judgment of Terrorism Cases: the case of covert operations and the protection of sensitive intelligence information*", held in

Algiers on 1 and 2 October 2013, with the support of the United States Mission to the AU (USAU) ;

- (ii) training course on the analysis of operational intelligence, organized respectively in Algiers and Bamako, from 23 September to 1 October and from 4 to 12 November 2013, with financial and technical support from the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany (Bundeskriminalamt) ;
- (iii) training workshop on the strengthening of judicial responses to terrorism cases , held in Algiers from 5 to 7 December 2013;
- (iv) meeting of coordinators of the Regional Economic Communities against terrorism, held in Addis Ababa, from 6 to 7 December 2013 , with the support of the Spanish Government;
- (v) workshop on the implementation of “Memorandum of Algiers on the best practices regarding the prevention of kidnapping against payment of ransom by terrorist and the elimination of the attendant benefits” held in Algiers from 4 to 6 February 2014, in cooperation with the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF); and
- (vi) assessment visits by ACSRT to Côte d’Ivoire and Chad from 18 to 22 and from 24 to 29 November 2013, respectively, to assess the existing capacities and the ways and means to build them.

17. Furthermore, and pursuant to the Conclusions of the meeting of N’Djamena, the Commission has made arrangements for the implementation of the following measures:

- (i) Identification of existing security measures and agreements between the countries of the region and the assessment of their state of implementation, with the aim of supporting their operationalisation and improving their operational efficiency, if necessary. A questionnaire is being prepared and will be sent shortly to Member States of the Nouakchott Process;
- (ii) the development, based on existing experience, a generic Concept of Operation on joint patrols and joint units, with the aim of supporting the efforts of countries of the region, including through the sharing of successful experiences, including the arrangement between Chad, Niger and Nigeria. The brainstorming on this issue has begun and recommendations will be submitted to a meeting of military experts and Chiefs of Defense Staff of the countries in the region; and
- (iii) oorganization, in cooperation with relevant partners, of a workshop for capacity building in the fight against trafficking in weapons of mass destruction (chemical, nuclear, biological and radiological weapons) and related materials. The Commission is taking the necessary measures to this end.

18. The 4th meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services stressed the need to pursue and intensify the efforts made with respect to security cooperation, particularly in the light of the persistence of the terrorist threat. Among the specific measures agreed upon by the meeting are the need to expedite the communication of operational intelligence, the need for the Member States to equip themselves with enhanced capacities in terms of

personnel and equipment and the intensification of efforts to prepare an African arrest warrant in conformity with the relevant decisions of the PSC. The meeting was informed that as regards the issue of the establishment of a secure communication system among the intelligence and security services of the countries of the region, which was among the priorities identified by the Nouakchott Process, would be solved very soon.

IV. OPERATIONALISATION OF THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

19. The Nouakchott Ministerial meeting considered the operationalisation of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region, in view of the inadequacy of the geographical coverage of the different existing structures. Participants stressed the need for greater synergy between the various components of the African Standby Force (ASF), covering the North, West and Central Africa, to address the security challenges the Sahel-Saharan region faced, particularly through closer cooperation in intelligence sharing, training, equipment and the necessary operational capacity building. In this regard, it was agreed that the Commission would take a number of measures, including the preparation of a questionnaire, on the basis of which countries and organizations concerned would communicate their views and proposals on the operationalisation modalities and the strengthening the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region, the subsequent preparation by the Commission , of a report on the issue and the organization of a meeting of the countries concerned to consider the report and agree the best way forward.

20. However, as stated at the meeting in N'Djamena and while the Commission was working on the monitoring of the measures agreed upon in Nouakchott, new developments occurred. They related to: (i) the then ongoing assessment of the ASF, as requested by the 6th Ordinary Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Safety and Security (CTSDSS), held in Addis Ababa, on 30 April 2013 and approved by the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held on 26 and 27 May 2013 and (ii) the decision, in principle, to immediately establish, on a transitional basis and until the full operationalisation of the ASF and its Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC), the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). The outcome of the ASF Assessment, carried out by an Independent Panel of Experts, led by Professor Ibrahim Gambari and the modalities for the operationalisation of the ACIRC were submitted to a meeting of CTSDSS, held in Addis Ababa, on 14 January 2014. The CTSDSS welcomed the Report of the Panel of Experts and agreed on the need for the Member States, the Commission and the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution to work for the rapid implementation of the recommendations made as regards the formulation of mandates and decision -making, the Planning Elements (PLANELMs), the capabilities offered and the support to missions. With regard to the ACIRC, the CTSDSS welcomed efforts by the Commission to work out modalities for the operationalisation of this Capacity, stressing the need for harmonization between the concept of ACIRC and the RDC of the ASF.

21. At its 22nd Ordinary Session, held in Addis Ababa, on 30 and 31 January 2014, the Assembly of the Union had decided to operationalize the ACIRC as a transitional arrangement. It encouraged more Member States to contribute voluntarily capacities to the ACIRC, in a spirit of inclusiveness and solidarity. It decided that, at the request of a Member State or (s) of the AU, the PSC authorized the deployment of a force in conformity with the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the AU, particularly its Articles 4 (h) and 4 (j). The PSC coordinates the implementation of the mandate of the force.

22. As regards more specifically the way forward for the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region and within the context of the relevant aspects of the Declaration of the 7th Ordinary meeting of CTSDSS and the decision of the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, the Commission proposes to convene a meeting of the Chiefs of Defense Staff of the countries of the region, which will be preceded by a meeting of Experts to consider and finalize the concepts of operation of joint patrols and mixed units as agreed in N'Djamena. These documents would then be submitted to the Ministers of Defense of the countries of the region, which could also seize that opportunity to consider the ways and means to strengthen existing regional cooperation structures, including the Operational Chiefs of Staff Committee (CRIC), based in Tamanrasset, Algeria.

23. The overall objective is to facilitate greater sharing, according to the most appropriate manner, the efforts to promote regional security, building on existing structures of the APSA, including regional standby brigades and devices that will be implemented in the framework of the CARIC. This should be guided by the principle of flexibility and adaptability to the specific needs of the countries concerned. It is based on the fact, acknowledged by all, that the security challenges faced by countries of the region require greater cooperation and synergy.

24. In addition, the Commission proposes to institutionalize the Nouakchott Process with the establishment of a lean secretariat, which would be provided by the MISAHEL. The Mission would second a small team to Niamey, where the AU has a representation (Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition - CELTHO), which would carry out this function with the logistical and administrative support of CELTHO. The role of the Secretariat would be to facilitate the monitoring of the conclusions of the different meetings organized within the framework of the Process. Similarly, it is proposed to take steps to detach experts to the representations of the AU in the Sahelo-Saharan region (Abuja, Algiers, N'Djamena and Ouagadougou) to ensure a better follow up with the countries concerned, the decisions agreed in the relevant Nouakchott Process and a tighter regional network.

25. The Niamey meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services stressed the need to speed up efforts to operationalize the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region, taking into account the decisions of the AU Summit of January 2014 on the assessment of the ASF and the establishment of the ACIRC. In this regard, it noted the proposals submitted by the Commission in its second progress report to the Ministers.

V. OBSERVATIONS

26. Nine months after its launch, the Nouakchott Process has made significant progress. Several meetings and activities have been organized, which helped to enhance security cooperation in the region. These efforts must be continued and intensified through the effective implementation of the pending provisions of the conclusions of the meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services and the ministerial meetings. At the same time, discussions have been initiated with regard to the operationalisation of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region. It is now critical to move to the practical phase, based on the recommendations above as they will be reviewed and adopted by the ministerial meeting.

27. Building on the commitment made by the countries of the region to continue to work towards the strengthening of the Nouakchott Process, as reiterated by the 4th meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services, it is recommended that the participating countries hold, as soon as possible, a summit so as to give a new political impetus to the efforts made to date. Such a summit would afford an opportunity to consolidate the progress made and to open new prospects for the cooperation that has developed among the countries of the region at the security level. It would also facilitate the mobilization of a more sustained international support for the Nouakchott Process.

28. The efforts made by the AU within this Process involve the overall approach it endeavors to promote, through its draft Strategy for the Sahel, with the support of international partners. We should here welcome the increased mobilization of the international community in favor of countries of the region, as evidenced by the efforts of the United Nations, the EU and other international actors, as well as the awareness of the need for close coordination of initiatives. As agreed at the 6th meeting of the SFG, it is important that these efforts continue to be based on the priorities set by the countries of the region and informed by the principles of national ownership and regional leadership.