

Security Council told African-led force on terrorism in the Sahel operational but challenged

15 August 2017 – The joint task force by the so-called Group of Five (G5) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – to tackle the threat of terrorism in Africa's Sahel region is now operational, but a number of challenges remain, including funding, the United Nations Security Council was today told.

The creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force has the potential to make a significant contribution to efforts already under way to stabilize the region, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, El-Ghassim Wane, [told](#) the 15-member Council in New York.

But we must also be realistic about the challenges that remain and the issues that remain to be resolved. The success of the Joint Force depends as much on deepening this regional partnership and on the applicable policy framework, as on the determination of its members to achieve its operationalization, and the unfailing support of their international partners.

Mr. Wane said the Joint Force offers a unique opportunity to respond to regional challenges, but only if other aspects and cases of instability in the region are addressed.

Addressing the root causes of instability in the Sahel requires going beyond military action and tackling the governance gap, chronic poverty and unemployment, climate change and financing for development, he said.

Abject poverty, fast population growth, climate change, recurrent food and nutrition crises, armed conflicts and violence converge dangerously and undermine the lives and assets and future prospects of millions of families across the Sahel region, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) has said. More than 30 million people face food insecurity, one in five children under the age of five suffers from acute malnutrition and at least 4.9 million are displaced by the effects of conflicts.

Speaking to the Security Council, the senior UN official also noted the need to tackle cross-border crime and to impose targeted sanctions, as well as to create a political strategy to guide the activities of the Joint Force and align them with the Malian peace process and other regional initiatives.

He noted also that the Joint Force should work closely with the recently established working group of the Executive Committee on the Sahel chaired by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and the African Union's peace and security architecture.

Among the greatest needs are funding, Mr. Wane said praying the five Member States for contributing funds to the project.

Those joint contribution, combined with the European Union's pledged contribution, as announced by Commissioner Federica Mogherini in June, amount to €108 million, or 25 percent of total requirements.

While generating pledges and contributions to meet the requirements of the Joint Force will be critical, the setting up of transparent, coordinated and effective funding will be equally as important, Mr. Wane said, noting the planned meeting in September hosted by German and French Defence Ministries to discuss further opportunities to support the Joint Force.

The Joint Force is ready to conduct its first coordinated operations along Mali's borders with Nigeria and Burkina Faso in October, with greater capacity in spring 2018.

A written report on the workings of the Joint Force is expected in October.

Visiting injured 'blue helmets' in Mali

Meanwhile, in Mali today, the Head of the UN Mission, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, along with the Malian Prime Minister and governmental officials, visited the UN camp in Timbuktu and met with the wounded following yesterday's attacks on UN camps in Douenza and Timbuktu.

A UN peacekeeper, a Malian soldier and a member of the Malian gendarmerie were killed, along with six Malian contractors in the attacks. A number of other people were also wounded.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali ([MINUSMA](#)) said the situation in Timbuktu today is calm but tense, with the presence of a large number of Malian security and defence forces.

[UN humanitarian team activated in Nepal in wake of severe floods and landslides](#)

15 August 2017 – The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has been activated in Nepal to support response efforts in the aftermath of severe floods that have hit the nation, the office of the [United Nations Resident Coordinator in the country](#) has said.

According to a [humanitarian update](#) issued by the office, as of 11:00 AM local time, 14 August, at least 66 people including children have

been killed, 35 are missing, and many have been displaced following large-scale flooding and landslides in the wake of the worst rains to strike Nepal in 15 years.

The full extent of the disaster is not yet known [as] many affected areas remain inaccessible due to damaged roads and bridges, read the update.

It also noted that rapid assessments are being conducted in the impacted districts and that initial reports show that power and Internet connectivity has been disrupted in some areas and transport infrastructure has been damaged. A major airport located in Biratnagar city (in the south of the country) has been completely inundated.

There is also growing concern for water-borne diseases and health facilities in at least two districts (Mahottari and Banke) have been completely flooded.

Anecdotal information from the field indicates that a significant number of pregnant and lactating mothers, disabled and other vulnerable groups are affected, the update added.

The disaster comes at a time when the landlocked Asian nation was struggling to recover from the 2015 earthquakes. Some five of the 27 affected districts are also earthquake-affected, while four of them were hit by floods a year prior, the update mentioned.

The UN Resident Coordinator's office also noted that the impact of the current floods could be exacerbated by pre-existing social and economic disparities, with some of the affected districts having the lowest Human Development Index ([HDI](#)) scores in the country.

Experience from the 2014 floods that affected Banke, Bardiya, Dang and Surkhet [districts] indicates that in [areas] where malnutrition is already a concern, the onset of such an emergency can have a sudden and severe impact on malnutrition rates, added the humanitarian note.

'Dramatic' rise in Central African Republic violence happening out of media eyes, warns UNICEF

15 August 2017 – The Central African Republic (CAR) has spiralled into violence and remains one of the worst countries in the world to be a child and right now there are few eyes looking at them and few hands trying to help, the United Nations children's agency said today.

The past year, and especially the last quarter, has seen a [dramatic increase in violence](#), Donaig Le Du, spokesperson for the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)), told reporters at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

There are now an estimated 600,000 internally displaced people, up from 440,000 at the end of April a big increase in the past 2-3 months, she continued, pointing out that 600,000 was the April 2014 count, right after the peak of the crisis.

And there are still 480,000 CAR refugees in neighbouring countries. So out of an estimated population of a little over five million, one in five is either a refugee or displaced, half of them children, Ms. Le Du added.

UNICEF noted that as the country spirals into violence, Bangui, the capital, is quiet.

The roads are bad, and with the rainy season and insecurity, it becomes nearly impossible to travel. There is limited cell phone coverage, the spokesperson explained.

She gave the example of six Red Cross volunteers whose deaths were not reported until after took two weeks after they were killed in Gambo earlier this month.

Two-thirds of the country is controlled by armed groups

Beyond Bangui, two-thirds of the country is controlled by armed groups.

In the cities and villages that were recently affected by violence, that means that schools are closed. That teachers don't dare to go to schools. Several NGOs [non-governmental organizations] have retreated, which means no health care. Supplies are looted at one health centre, solar panels were stolen from solar fridges for example, which means no immunizations, Ms. Le Du elaborated.

Horrendous reports on children's rights violations have surfaced over the past months and weeks.

Precise numbers are impossible to know but we know for a fact that children have been killed; there have been incidents of sexual violence, and that recruitment into armed groups is happening. But there are less direct violations with lasting consequences having to flee or take refuge in the bush; having no education or health care, she said.

One specificity of the CAR conflict shows little fighting between armed groups, which instead attack civilians on the other side and increasingly target the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission ([MINUSCA](#)) and humanitarian actors.

An open letter to the UN Secretary-General from major international NGOs identifies the CAR as the most dangerous country in the world to deliver humanitarian assistance with the world's highest level of violence against humanitarian workers, accounting for one-third of all incidents

targeting aid workers.

The CAR is also the world's least developed country, placing 188th out of the 188 countries on the Human Development Index.

“But the world cannot abandon CAR's children and right now there are few eyes looking at them and few hands trying to help,” Ms. Le Du concluded.

As of end-July, UNICEF's \$46.3 million humanitarian appeal for CAR children was 42 per cent funded. Having been revised up to \$52.8 million, it now has a 63 per cent funding gap.

[First of 33,000 Congolese refugees relocated to new settlement in Angola – UN agency](#)

15 August 2017 – More than 1,500 Congolese refugees who have fled violence and ethnic tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been relocated from reception centres in northern Angola to a newly established settlement, the United Nations refugee agency today said.

Addressing journalists in Geneva, Adrian Edwards, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), said the Lóvua settlement was created “to improve the living conditions of refugees.”

Built on about 33 km² of land allocated by the Government of Angola, the site allows refugees to receive a plot of land to build shelters and to grow food to supplement their food rations.

UNHCR and partners plan to relocate tens of thousands of Congolese refugees to the new site, which is some 100 km inland from the border with the DRC.

“While the security situation in the Kasai region remains volatile, the Angolan authorities and UNHCR with partners [are ready to provide](#) protection and assistance for up to 50,000 Congolese refugees by the end of 2017 at Lóvua,” Mr. Edwards said.

Some 33,000 refugees are currently in reception centres that Mr. Edwards termed “over-crowded.”

The UN agency has called for financial support to assist the refugees. A humanitarian appeal for \$65.5 million launched in June is only about 32 per cent funded.

Additional funding is urgently needed to continue developing infrastructure and services for refugees in Lóvua settlement, Mr. Edwards said.

[UN rights chief urges Kenyan leaders to act responsibly, avoid further violence](#)

15 August 2017 – Calling on the Kenyan authorities to avoid violence, the United Nations human rights chief today urged the Government to make an immediate announcement that it will cooperate and ensure accountability for reported abuse by security forces which has led to deaths and injuries, including among children.

Kenya is at a critical juncture, said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. The country's political leaders must do their utmost [to calm a volatile political climate](#). If there are claims to make about the conduct of the elections, they should be made through constitutional and legal means.

He noted that people have the right to assemble and protest peacefully, and the authorities have a responsibility to ensure they can do so.

The Government also has a responsibility to ensure that security forces prioritize dialogue, non-violent means and exercise restraint, using proportionate force only when unavoidable, the UN High Commissioner said.

He decried the use of violence by protesters, but also stressed that political leaders should send clear messages to their supporters urging peaceful conduct.

All acts of violence, including the serious allegations of excessive use of force by security forces, must be promptly and independently investigated, he added.

As part of that effort, the High Commissioner called on the Government to make an immediate announcement that it will cooperate fully and unequivocally with the Independent Policing Oversight Authority and with subsequent efforts to ensure accountability.

There are media reports that Kenyan security forces used live ammunition against protesters, and stories of alleged police brutality, leading to several deaths and injuries, including children.

Protests erupted after the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) announced on 11 August that Uhuru Kenyatta was the President-elect.

UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres this weekend stressed the importance of dialogue to diffuse the conflict.

He said the UN, in close collaboration with the African Union and other multilateral and bilateral partners, is fully engaged with Kenya's political leadership and relevant stakeholders to facilitate the successful conclusion of the electoral process.