

News story: Penny Mordaunt represents UK Prime Minister at Sahel Conference

Representing the UK Prime Minister alongside world leaders including President Macron of France and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Ms Mordaunt announced further support to help strengthen security across the Sahel, where extremist groups including Da-esh, Al Qaeda and Boko Haram often operate freely.

The Sahel area of Africa (Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso) is beset by trafficking, violence, instability and extremism – which present significant future risk to the UK. The Sahel also has the fastest growing population in the world and the humanitarian situation is acute and precarious – 21.7m people don't have reliable access to their next meal.

As announced by Prime Minister Theresa May and President Macron of France at the UK-France Summit last month, the UK is providing £50m of lifesaving UK aid to the area, three chinook helicopters for strategic airlift and considering options to enhance UK diplomatic presence in the Sahel – in order to tackle significant future threats.

The additional support announced today will help improve the accommodation of Niger's army, who are currently living in tents while tackling armed groups along the border with Mali, and will contribute to emergency medical evacuation airlift provision.

The International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The Sahel is one of the poorest places in the world, where over 40% of people struggle to live on less than \$2 a day, and where violence, conflict and extremism are widespread.

It's essential we act now with our European partners to help the Sahelian nations build security and stability, while continuing to deliver emergency humanitarian aid to those in desperate need.

By helping to keep hundreds of thousands of people safe from starvation and harm, we are tackling the causes of both migration and terrorism, to keep Britain safe.

Notes to Editors

- Today the International Development Secretary announced £2 million non-ODA CSSF for the G5 Sahel Joint Force to be spent over the next two years. The G5 Joint Force is a Sahelian regional security initiative and so this will involve supporting Sahel states to improve their own security. This will include:

- Better infrastructure to improve the living conditions of the Nigerien G5 battalion – who are currently living in tents while tackling armed groups along the border with Mali.
- support to medical evacuation for G5 forces for troops in need of urgent medical care.
- The announcement was made at the G5 Pledging Conference which saw international donors such as France and Germany provide additional funding to support the G5 Joint Force.
- The G5 countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.
- The humanitarian need in the Sahel is acute and precarious. 21.7m people don't have reliable access to their next meal – that's 1/3 of the population of the UK. The Sahel is poor relative to the rest of Africa, and the Human Development Index rankings in the region are amongst the lowest in the world.
- Extremist groups such as Da-esh, al-Qaeda and Boko Haram already operate freely in much of the Sahel, and the area risks becoming a place of shelter for displaced extremists. It is also beset by widespread trafficking in people, drugs, weapons and illegal wildlife.
- The Sahel is also a key transit zone for modern slavery from Nigeria and the key illegal migration transit route for those travelling from West Africa to Libya and Algeria.