

Speech: “A successful peace process is at the heart of any strategy to defeat terrorism and traffickers in the Sahel”

Thank you Mr. President for convening today’s debate. Your country deserves great credit for your leadership, and your steadfast support for the countries of the Sahel.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and their excellencies: Foreign Minister Diope, Chairperson Faki Mahamat, and the EU Special Representative to the Sahel, Angel Losada Fernández. We welcome the Secretary-General’s report and today’s briefing on the activities of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

During the recent Security Council visit, all Council members saw the serious challenges facing the countries of the Sahel. Those challenges represent a serious danger to the people of the region, and to partners and allies who are working to support them. I want to begin by offering my condolences to all of those so tragically killed, including most recently three UN peacekeepers from Chad in northern Mali on Thursday.

In the last twelve months we’ve witnessed a continuing stream of deadly terrorist attacks resulting in the tragic loss of innocent lives; an increase in attacks against MINUSMA forces; the ongoing corrosive influence of organised criminals trafficking weapons, drugs and people across the region; and the desperate journey of migrants, so often intercepted by people traffickers seeking to exploit them.

We all have a role to play in addressing these challenges. The United Kingdom has supported projects across the Sahel and wider region, particularly in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin.

The British Army trained 22,000 Nigerian troops in counter terrorism tactics last year alone. We have invested over \$6 million in tackling modern slavery, and \$2.5 million in a Joint Border task force with the Nigerian Army. We also provide training for Nigerian anti trafficking officers.

Across the Sahel the United Kingdom spent over \$225 million on humanitarian and development projects last year, and we are providing human rights training to Malian troops through the EU Training Mission in Mali. Our National Crime Agency recently dismantled two people-smuggling rings in Mali. And we stand ready to do more to support the G5 countries, and their allies, to improve the security situation.

The creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force is a step forward in countering terrorism and illegal migration. We were pleased that this Council offered

its political support to the mission earlier this year. For our part the United Kingdom is currently undertaking a scoping mission to see what more we can do in the Sahel, including potential bilateral support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

Funding is an important factor in determining a mission's success, which is why we were pleased to support the EU commitment to provide €50 million to the Joint Force. We welcome the work undertaken to establish the G5 Joint Force. I was encouraged by reports from my ambassador following his visit to the region.

We recognise the challenges faced by the force and the value of tackling terrorists and traffickers with a holistic approach right across the region, in particular ensuring there is a clear plan to deliver services alongside security. If security gains are to take root, work must also continue to develop robust frameworks for compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law. We welcome the Secretary-General's report and his proposals for potential UN support. We are studying these in detail and considering the complementary roles that bilateral and multilateral support can play in the Sahel region. We must ensure that MINUSMA is able to deliver its current mandate effectively and efficiently.

Mr President,

Over 140 brave MINUSMA peacekeepers have given their lives for the people of Mali. They and G5 forces operate in one of the most dangerous places in the world and I pay tribute to them. And I call upon the Government of Mali and other parties to the peace process to show the same courage, commitment, and resolve to bring unity to the country. A successful peace process is at the heart of any strategy to defeat terrorism and traffickers in the Sahel. We in this Council expect a redoubling of efforts for peace and to see the political will to overcome the remaining obstacles.

To conclude, the United Kingdom remains committed to peace and security across the Sahel. To that end, I reiterate our strong support for the G5 Sahel Joint Force which I sincerely believe can make an important contribution towards achieving this goal.