

# Supporting holistic efforts to stabilise the Sahel through security, governance, and development

Thank you, President, and thank you to our briefers.

I would like to make three points.

First, the peoples of the Sahel can continue to count on the United Kingdom's steadfast support. The challenges facing the region are complex, interlinked and require holistic solutions. We are working with our partners in the Sahel to foster long-term stability by addressing drivers of conflict, including climate change.

We are also working to protect the most vulnerable in the Sahel from the impacts of the global food crisis caused by Russia's illegal and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. In addition to agreeing unprecedented World Bank financing to protect vulnerable countries from the economic impacts of Russia's invasion, the United Kingdom's previous funding of \$200 million, plus our new humanitarian funding, will help over 300 million people in the region with food assistance.

Secondly, I want to emphasise the importance of ensuring that all actors in the Sahel promote and protect human rights, and comply with international human rights and humanitarian law.

In this respect we remain seriously concerned by the presence of the Wagner Group in Mali. Allegations of human rights violations and abuses have increased significantly since Wagner deployed to Mali in December 2021. Wagner also has a track record of exploiting natural resources and spreading destabilising disinformation.

We urge the Malian authorities to end their relationship with the Wagner Group, in the interests of national and regional stability. The Malian authorities should also allow MINUSMA unfettered access to Moura to conduct a transparent and independent investigation into allegations that Malian troops, operating alongside Wagner mercenaries, massacred civilians in March.

Thirdly, President, lasting peace and stability in the Sahel will depend on good governance, built around the rule of law, accountable and effective state institutions, and development of sustainable livelihoods. We therefore support ECOWAS efforts to encourage timely transitions back to constitutional order in Mali and Burkina Faso. We encourage the transitional authorities in both countries to continue to engage constructively with ECOWAS on timetables for political transition and practical steps to prepare for elections.

In conclusion, President, the United Kingdom is proud to be supporting efforts to stabilise the Sahel, including through our deployment in MINUSMA

and our humanitarian and development partnerships. We remain committed to helping address the Sahel's challenges through a holistic approach incorporating security, governance, and development.

And I thank you, President.