

UN chief urges Security Council to 'be ambitious' in supporting Sahel anti-terror force

30 October 2017 – Stressing the urgent need to help Mali and other countries the Sahel address cross-border terrorism and organized crime, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Monday invited the United Nations Security Council to 'be ambitious' in deciding how the UN supports the region's newly-established joint force.

'The situation in Sahel challenges us all,' Mr. Guterres told the 15-member body, describing the difficult operational circumstances facing the joint force created by the Group of Five Sahel countries (G5) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – to combat terrorism and organized criminal activity, and to promote stability and development in the region.

'Time is against us,' he said, stressing the need to unite efforts to address the root causes of instability in the region. He warned that not acting could have severe consequences for the region and beyond.

At the outset, Mr. Guterres paid tribute to the three Chadian peacekeepers of the UN Mission in Mali, known by its French acronym MINUSMA, who were killed in an attack on Thursday, as well as to their wounded colleagues.

'Their sense of sacrifice compels us to urgently find solutions to counter terrorism in Mali, while ensuring the security and safety of MINUSMA contingents,' he said.

In his [16 October report](#) on the activities of the African-led joint force, the UN chief outlined four possible options to support the force, ranging from using the existing mandate of MINUSMA, to an expanded MINUSMA mandate, to the establishment of a dedicated United Nations support office.

Under the most ambitious plan, the office would provide full-fledged support, similar to that provided to the non-UN missions, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). A less ambitious option would limit the scope of the office's services to logistical and 'soft' support.

The Secretary-General says in the report that he firmly believes that 'only predictable and sustainable funding and support will enable the Joint Force to contribute to the lasting stabilization of the Sahel.'

'We must think of innovative actions in support of the G5 Sahel' – UN chief

At today's meeting, Mr. Guterres described how poverty, underdevelopment and climate change have contributed to humanitarian and security crises in the Sahel, and how the weak institutions, exclusion and marginalization of some

groups are exploited by extremists and terrorists.

He also said that porous borders facilitate the trafficking of human beings, drug and arms trafficking, and other criminal activities and that the humanitarian crisis is getting worse, with nearly five million people displaced, and 24 million people need humanitarian aid.

“Given the urgency of the situation, we must think of innovative actions in support of the G5 Sahel efforts in the security field, but also in the areas of development and governance,” Mr. Guterres said.

“I therefore invite this Council to be ambitious in the choice it has to make. Strong political support for the G5 Sahel and material and operational support commensurate with the challenges are essential,” he added.

“Since taking office, prevention is my top priority,” he emphasized, explaining that in the Sahel, this means preventing the region from sinking into chaos, which could have dangerous consequences for the continent and the entire world.

Earlier this month, Security Council members visited Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso to assess the level and the nature of the threat posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime in the Sahel, as well as the status of the operationalization of the joint force. The visiting mission also delivered a message to the parties in Mali regarding the need to accelerate the implementation of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.