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Statement by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel To the Security Council

19 June 2014, New York

**Monsieur le Président,
Distingués membres du Conseil de sécurité,**

1. J'ai l'honneur d'informer le Conseil de sécurité des progrès réalisés dans la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie intégrée des Nations Unies pour le Sahel. Comme vous le savez, j'ai pris mes fonctions très récemment et je souhaite saisir cette opportunité pour vous faire part de mes premières impressions et quelques perspectives sur la direction future des efforts des Nations Unies dans la région du Sahel.

2. Depuis l'adoption de la Stratégie Intégrée des Nations Unies pour le Sahel par le Conseil de sécurité l'an passé, le système des Nations Unies dans la région a initié de manière collective un certain nombre d'activités régionales dans les domaines de la gouvernance, de la sécurité et de la résilience, comme mentionné dans le rapport du Secrétaire général. Dans le domaine de la gouvernance, nous avons donné la priorité à des activités promouvant l'inclusion politique et destinées à créer un consensus au sein de la population autour de priorités nationales et régionales. Nous avons également mis l'accent sur des activités créant les capacités nécessaires à l'amélioration de la prestation de services essentiels. Tout en continuant à nous concentrer sur ces priorités importantes, nous devons faire plus pour atteindre les peuples du Sahel et les mettre au cœur des efforts visant à résoudre les défis liés à la gouvernance. Dans le domaine de la sécurité, nous avons lancé des actions qui visent à promouvoir une gestion commune des frontières et empêcher la propagation d'idéologies violentes à travers des mesures de confiance et de renforcement des capacités. Ces activités doivent être intensifiées et il faudra accorder plus d'attention et de ressources pour lutter contre le chômage des jeunes. Dans le domaine de la résilience, nous continuerons à lier les interventions humanitaires et les activités de développement, y compris en favorisant les activités économiques transfrontalières légales.

Mr. President,

3. In the little time that I have had in Office, I was struck by the deterioration of the political and security situation in the region, notably in Libya, the enduring political and security challenges in Mali, the persistent terrorist attacks throughout the region, notably those carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria, all of which continue to have negative consequences on civilians and local economies. The humanitarian situation remains

Communications and Public Information Office

Kouider Zerrouk, Chief – (+221) 33-869-8560 / 77- 3324928 – zerrouk@un.org

Guilaine Thébault Diagne, Officer – (+221) 33-869-8585 / 77- 4309946 – thebault-diagne@un.org

Web: <http://unowa.unmissions.org> – https://twitter.com/UN_UNOWA



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extremely fragile in 2014, at least 20 million people remain at risk of food insecurity and nearly 5 million children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Meanwhile, high levels of youth unemployment in the Sahel increase the appeal of violent ideology.

Mr. President,

4. As you are aware, the implementation of the UN Integrated Strategy requires both the sustained political will of the governments of the countries of the Sahel, and, more broadly, profound political, economic and social transformations in the region.

5. One of the key lessons we learnt from the crisis in Mali is that democratization processes, which translate into internationally-sanctioned elections and efforts towards decentralization, need to be complemented by efforts to strengthen state institutions and better integrate and manage diverse societies.

6. At every level, the quality of governance is crucial to create an environment that reduces effectively the risk of identity-based conflict, religious radicalization of the society, and the youth in particular, or their recruitment in terrorist groups or any other kind of criminal networks.

7. The formulation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel has raised very high expectations among the peoples of the region, requiring tangible benefits for the populations as quickly as possible. That is why, in implementing the Integrated Strategy, the United Nations system will prioritize the inclusion of civil society, tribal and religious leaders, and research institutions.

Mr. President,

8. The dramatic surge in the terrorist acts of Boko Haram in northern and central Nigeria since 2013 is now threatening also Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Moreover, the conflict and state collapse in Central African Republic has led to higher instability in Central Africa and thus increased the risk of new connections between terrorist groups based in Sahara/Sahel, Nigeria and Horn/East Africa. The reality on the ground is that North, West and Central Africa form a contiguous geopolitical region where short-term as well as mid- and long-term multidimensional responses to various threats to peace and security need to be implemented collectively.

9. That is why efforts to address security challenges in the Sahel within the framework of the United Nations strategy cannot ignore the interactions between core Sahel countries and North Africa or between core Sahel and other countries of West and Central Africa. Responding to the threats of insecurity in the Sahel in a sustainable manner requires a well-coordinated approach encompassing North, West and Central African countries and a flexible, issue-based, geographical definition of the borders of the Sahel region.



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10. The successful implementation of the strategy therefore requires that the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West Africa and for Central Africa and the Special Envoy for the Sahel work closely together in diplomatic and political action, taking into account also UN political initiatives in North African countries, especially Libya.

Mr. President,

11. In November 2013, the Ministers of the region established a Coordination Platform for the Sahel, entrusted with the overall coordination of the initiatives on the Sahel with a rotating chairmanship, currently encumbered by Mali. The broad membership of the Platform, from Cape Verde to Sudan and from Cameroun to Tunisia reflects the adoption of a flexible geographical definition of the region, which is necessary for the successful implementation of the strategy. It can also generate the much needed inter-regional cooperation mentioned earlier and to improve relations among the countries concerned, beyond the boundaries of the individual economic communities.

12. Since its establishment, the members of the Platform have met twice, endorsing the roadmap of the current Chairmanship and agreeing to take concrete steps to improve coordination. Despite these efforts, the Platform has faced challenges in promoting regional cooperation in the Sahel, largely due to the emergence of competing interventions and strategies that may delay progress towards long term stability and development in the region.

13. Moving forward, it is important to support the rotating Chairmanship to strengthen coordination and cooperation among all the concerned regional and international actors. This cannot be achieved by simply exchanging information. There is a need to leverage the comparative strengths of national governments, sub-regional economic communities, the African Union and other concerned multilateral organisations and financial institutions to harmonize the multiple strategies. I am fully committed to supporting the effective functioning of the Platform. In this task, I have joined hands with the African Union High Representative for the Sahel, Mr. Pierre Buyoya. Within the framework of our respective mandates, he and I are co-chairing the Technical Secretariat, which is tasked to support the work and implement the decisions of the Coordination Platform, under the guidance of the rotating Chairmanship.

Mr. President,

14. Although the United Nations has significantly improved internal coordination and promoted a more coherent response, more needs to be done for coordinated support by the international community to effectively respond to the persisting challenges in the Sahel region.

15. When the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Chairperson of the African Union, the President of the World Bank Group, the President of the African Development Bank and the European Commissioner for



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Development visited the region in November last year, they committed to breaking down institutional barriers and ensuring better targeted and coordinated support based on complementary areas of strength. I intend to honour that commitment as a matter of priority. If the international community does not improve coordination, then the limited resources that have been made available so far will not have the desired impact. Acting fast, and in a coordinated manner, is necessary to overcome the current pattern of recurrent crises and move towards a future of stability and development in the region.

Mr. President,

16. My predecessor, Mr. Romano Prodi, has overseen the development of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Said Djinnit, has helped set up coordination mechanisms within the United Nations system for the effective implementation of the strategy. I will build on these important efforts, while continuing to consult with all concerned Member States and civil society as well as regional and international partners for the successful implementation of the integrated strategy for the Sahel.

17. Les pays de la région ont besoin d'assistance pour poser les fondations de la stabilité et du développement durable. Le renforcement de la coopération entre partenaires nationaux, régionaux et internationaux est une condition préalable à l'assistance dont ils ont besoin. Pendant l'année à venir, la priorité des Nations unies sera de donner de l'ampleur à l'action conjointe en unissant les efforts politiques, sécuritaires, en matière de développement et en matière humanitaire dans toute la région. Mais pour réussir, nous avons besoin de votre soutien et engagement pour promouvoir une action concertée de tous les acteurs œuvrant pour le bien-être des peuples du Sahel et surtout l'engagement et la volonté politique des gouvernements des pays de la région pour entreprendre, sans plus tarder, les réformes structurelles indispensables au bien-être de la région.