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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Abdou ABARRY,  
Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations  
on behalf of the A3 + Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

**Open VTC on the G5-Sahel Joint Force**

**New York, 05th June, 2020**

**Mr. President,**

On behalf of the A3+1, namely, South Africa, Tunisia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Niger, I would like to thank very sincerely Mr. Jean Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his excellent presentation and for his sustained commitment to stabilizing the situation in the Sahel.

We welcome and thank His Excellency Mr. Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mauritania, current Chair of the G5 Sahel, for the honor he has bestowed upon us in taking part in the work of the Council today.

**Mr. President,**

The recent report of the Secretary-General highlighted the security challenges posed by Armed Terrorist Groups within the G5 Sahel States, which are among the most economically challenged in the world.

This placed a burden on our populations whose increasing number of internally displaced persons has worryingly reached 1.4 million. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has also rocketed to 14.7 million. We express our grave concern with these trends and underscore the additional resources required to alleviate the conditions of those in need.

In addition to these factors, the effects of climate change, particularly on pastoral activity, essential to local economies, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic could further aggravate the already precarious situation of the populations of Sahel.

We deplore the fact that terrorist groups in the Sahel have ignored the Secretary-General's call for a humanitarian truce and have instead sought to take advantage of the pandemic by continuing their murderous attacks and propaganda.

**Mr. President,**

It is undeniable that since the last report of the Secretary-General, the security situation in the Sahel has deteriorated.

The increasing asymmetrical attacks by armed terrorist groups have indiscriminately affected our Defense and Security Forces, our allied forces such as Barkhane Operation, and unfortunately our civilian populations too, mostly women and children.

In the face of this unprecedented violence, the G5 Sahel countries, devoting between 15% to 30% of their budget to the defense sector, have continued their dedicated efforts to eradicate terrorism with the unwavering support of their partners.

Thanks to these efforts, on March 3rd, as indicated in the report, the Joint Force freed (6) hostages at the end of a particularly complex operation.

This clearly demonstrated the military capacity of the Force and the tenacity and dedication of its soldiers.

Additionally, the G5 Sahel Joint Force has been active in many red zones and has carried out successful operations, either on its own or with the support of the Barkhane Force, depending on their nature.

We welcome the fact that the complex situation prevailing in the Lake Chad region has improved significantly thanks to the excellent results of Operation "Colère de Bohoma", led by the Chadian army, whose Commander in Chief, President Idriss Deby Itno, was himself on the battle ground.

At the same time, the security arrangements of the G5 Sahel have been strengthened with the recent creation, in Niamey (Niger), of the Joint Command mechanism of all the Forces operating in the Liptako Gourma and the extension of the area of intervention of the G5 Sahel Joint Force from 50 km to 100 km on both sides of the State borders.

**Mr. President,**

The A3 + Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, appreciate the efforts of the international community and, in particular, those of MINUSMA in support of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

The fight against terrorism has thus been strengthened, in particular with the launch of the Coalition for the Sahel during the Pau Summit of 13 January 2020 and the prospect of the start of Operation by Takuba Task Force, in which European special forces will be engaged.

In this context, we also recall, the African Union Peace and Security Council Communiqué of its 920<sup>th</sup> meeting, which welcomed the collaboration efforts towards realizing the deployment of 3 000 troops to the Sahel for six months.

Likewise, we welcome the continued determination of the ECOWAS and WAEMU to combat terrorism and achieve peace, security and stability in the Sahel. This showcases resilience and resolve of regional organizations on issues affecting their member states.

We call on the international community to intensify its support for the fight against terrorism by strengthening the military capabilities of the G5 Sahel states, assisting with restoration of State presence and authority in areas under terrorist threat and also by supporting economic and social development efforts in the affected areas.

We wish to reiterate the legitimate request, often expressed by the G5 Sahel states, that the Joint Force be placed under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. This would undoubtedly bolster the efforts of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, regional and continental efforts and strengthen the impetus to the fight against terrorism in the Sahel.

We are encouraged that despite the multiple challenges faced by the Joint Force, efforts have been made by the G5 Sahel states to advance the women, peace and security agenda by agreeing to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to force generation efforts, which is a clear recognition of the need for the greater participation of women in operations.

In this context, we call upon the relevant UN agencies, in particular, UN Women, and the international community to provide the necessary support to optimise these efforts.

**Mr. President,**

Keeping the Sahel high on the international agenda is of utmost importance, and even more so as we face this unprecedented crisis of Covid-19.

As was recalled during the 4th Extraordinary Session of the G5 Sahel Heads of State Conference held on 15 December 2019, it is important that a Marshall Plan be put in place to support development actions in the Sahel.

As we approach the renewal of the mandate of MINUSMA, which is closely linked with the operations of the joint force of the G5 Sahel, the A3 + Saint Vincent and the Grenadines nourish the hope that this renewal will strengthen the framework of this cooperation in a practical and sustainable manner.

It is against this background that the A3+1 is of the view that emphasis should be placed on optimizing the current support mechanism so that it reaches the Joint Force's battalions with less constraints while strengthening their capacities and competencies.

A complete operational support should be provided to the Joint Force, both tactically and strategically.

**Mr. President,**

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm here the firm commitment of the G5 Sahel states to the respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law as well as the commitment to their implementation of human rights compliance framework.

The fight against terrorism, whether in the Sahel or elsewhere, should not put burden on civilian populations or be a source of additional fear for them. On the contrary, it should free them from the grip of criminal terrorists, whose attacks have caused over 4,000 deaths in 2019 alone in the region.

In the pursuit of this asymmetrical war, if, unfortunately, doubts and suspicions of abuses or inappropriate behavior are noted with regard to the civilian population, everything should be done, with professionalism and determination, to identify the perpetrators of these acts and bring them to justice.

The response in our common fight against terrorism in the Sahel lies in our ability to develop a robust, coherent and integrated strategy to address the security, humanitarian and development challenges.

**I thank you.**