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**Draft statement by Ambassador Abdou ABARRY,
Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations
on behalf of A3 and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
on the Joint Force of the G5-Sahel**

New York, 16 November 2020

Thank you, Madam President,

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

We also thank Mr. Issa Konfourou for his participation in today's briefing on behalf of the G5 Sahel, (AFRCAN UNION BRIEFER), Ambassador. Bob Rae, Peacebuilding Commission Chair, and Mr Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service.

Madam President,

Before getting to the heart of the matter, I would like to welcome the fact that this time around the report under consideration has taken into account the perspectives emanating from the Joint Task Force, which is the main subject of the report. This has undoubtedly been made possible through enhanced collaboration and information sharing with the countries and actors concerned on the ground.

Madam President,

The Sahel region faces multiple and multifaceted challenges with devastating consequences for states and their populations.

The nexus between development and security, is clearly demonstrated, in this region where these phenomena interact with each other in a feedback loop effect. In this context, we underscore the necessity of a holistic approach that comprises political, security, and socio-economic development interventions that will lead to the achievement of sustainable peace and stability in the region. Furthermore, we believe that this would not be achieved without addressing the root causes of terrorism in the Sahel.

In this regard, the A3+1 welcomes the foresight of the G5 Sahel authorities and their adoption of a Strategy for Development and Security (SDS) in 2016, the implementation of which is based on a Priority Investment Program (PIP), and revolves around governance, resilience, security and infrastructure.

It comprises a portfolio of 40 structuring projects, with a total value of nearly €2 billion (13% financed by the Member States). Its first phase began in 2019 and will run through 2021.

It is clear that in the Sahel, PIP remains important and the relevant framework for necessary and urgent interventions. Its implementation must therefore continue to be a priority, just as it must remain as the channel through which international support must be provided, giving priority to local competencies - of the companies.

In order to do so, two priorities seem fundamental to us:

- To finance quick impact projects based on the involvement of the private sector, in good understanding with the decentralized authorities;
- Target border regions and ensure that employment opportunities prevent the recruitment of youth by armed groups.

This is, moreover, the reason why the A3+1 insisted on taking into account local content through Resolution 2531.

We therefore welcome all efforts in favor of a facility allowing the coordination of funding through Sahelian entities, because we will not be able to succeed by keeping them at bay.

Madam President,

The Secretary-General's report also highlights the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, which exacerbates the fragility of the G5 Sahelian states and the living conditions of the affected populations.

Indeed, in 2020, 31.4 million Sahelians are unfortunately in need of assistance and protection. The effects of COVID 19, food insecurity, climate change and flood have further complicated the situation.

In addition, the recent torrential rains have hit the region hard, causing significant loss of life and material damage.

In this context, we welcome the holding of the ministerial round table on the Central Sahel (Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso) in Copenhagen on October 20, co-hosted by the United Nations, Denmark, the European Union and Germany, aimed at addressing the humanitarian crisis as well as funding support for the region amongst the international community.

The A3+1 also welcomes, in this regard, the pledges made of funding for humanitarian interventions, totaling \$996.8 million for 2020 and \$725.4 million for 2021; and encourage international partners to give priority to the States concerned and their specialized agencies in the implementation of funded programs.

Madam President,

With regard to the security situation, I would like to welcome the fact that the complex situation in the Liptako-Gourma area has improved significantly subsequent to the operations of the Joint Task Force, which are in progress, and aim to cut off the various supply channels for armed terrorist groups and organized criminal groups, despite its limited resources.

However, security threats remain a serious concern and we condemn the increased terrorist attacks targeting defence and security forces and the increasing inter-communal violence instigated by local armed groups as well as terrorist groups.

The A3+1 is pleased with the increase of the operational capacity and the tempo of the operations of the Joint Task Force, whose successes are becoming more and more regular, as well as the operationalization of its Police Component. Operation SAMA 1 is an encouraging illustration in this regard.

Also, the announcement made on October 5 in Nouakchott, during the eighth ordinary session of the G5 Sahel Council of Ministers, of the upcoming deployment of a Chadian battalion to participate in Operation

SAMA 2, further reassures us in the fight against terrorism, particularly in the Central Zone.

We welcome the continued efforts of the African Union Peace and Security Council to work towards the upcoming deployment of 3,000 African Union Standby Force, which will further strengthen the fight against terrorism in the region.

Madam President,

In terms of the performance of the Joint Task Force, the operations of the last ten months in all three areas of operations have made it possible:

- To neutralize and/or capture one hundred twenty-three (123) terrorists;
- To arrest one hundred and four (104) traffickers;
- To seize, recover or destroy two hundred and fourteen (214) motorcycles and seventeen (17) vehicles;
- To destroy several logistic depots or IED manufacturing sites;
- To recover almost two hundred (200) weapons and thousands of munitions of all calibers.

At the same time, the restructuring of the Executive Secretariat of the G5 Sahel has made it more operational. This has enabled it to provide more effective support to the Joint Task Force.

The A3+1 welcomes the decisive support provided by MINUSMA to the Joint Force, including in Mali in the context of the stabilization and gradual restoration of State authority in the center and north of the country.

The same applies to the measures taken in recent months by the Mission in the context of the implementation of resolution 2351 (2020) and the completion of the construction and handover of the temporary headquarters of the Joint Force, which has considerably improved the Force's ability to operate more effectively.

The recent events in Mali call on us to redouble our efforts to help the country ensure the integrity and security of its territory and population.

It is clear that the return of defense and security forces throughout the country is a prerequisite for the return of regional administrations; this is why it is essential that Malian authorities consolidate their hold in threatened regions.

Beyond the security aspect, it is important to highlight the commitment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force alongside the populations of the Tri-border area where, from 1 to 3 October 2020, it carried out large-scale civil-military (CIMIC) actions by distributing hundreds of school kits to the neediest schoolchildren.

The A3+1 commends the significant strides the Joint Force has made to develop and implement human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework including the establishment of the Mechanism for Identification, Monitoring and Analysis of Civilian Casualties (MISAD). This illustrates the strong commitment of the G5 Sahel countries to respect human rights and international humanitarian law.

Madam President,

While we rightly appreciate the progress made in the collaboration and support provided by MINUSMA to the G5 Sahel Joint Force, it clear that this mode of support is neither adequate nor sufficient in the context of the fight against terrorism.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres, has repeated this viewpoint in numerous reports, including in his latest assessment of this support.

If the objective is to see the Joint Task Force become autonomous in the near future, we ought to invariably implement the recommendations of the evaluations of the support to the Joint Task Force.

This would necessarily require the establishment of a UN Support Office dedicated to the Joint Force and funded through assessed contributions from member states.

Moreover, we must take into account the provisions of resolution 2391, which clearly states that support for the Joint Task Force must not affect the performance of MINUSMA.

Furthermore, the current socio-political and security situation in Mali requires MINUSMA to redouble its efforts and focus on the core tasks of its mandate in order to achieve its strategic priorities.

At a time when several countries in the region are engaged in electoral processes that reveal or accentuate certain weaknesses, I am pleased to commend the positive role played by the United Nations Office in West Africa (UNOWAS) and call on all partners to further coordinate their initiatives and other support to the Sahel region.

In conclusion, and as stated by the UNSG in his latest report on the matter, “the international community has a moral obligation and shared responsibility to support the Member States of the G-5 Sahel in their

commendable efforts to bring peace and sustainable development to the region”.

Council members are also encouraged to be more pragmatic on this question of a global stake, because peace is a Global Public Good and the primary mission of the Joint Task Force is to rid the Sahel of those forces of evil and that, if not defeated urgently in this region, they could extend their sphere of influence elsewhere.

I thank you.