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**Draft statement by H.E. Mr. Abdou ABARRY,
Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations**

**on behalf of A3 and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
on West Africa and the Sahel**

8 July 2021

Mr. President,

1. On behalf of the A3+1 countries, namely Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Niger, I would like to welcome Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, in his new role as Special Representative of the Secretary General for West Africa and the Sahel, and thank him for the quality of his presentation.
2. We also followed with attention the presentation made by Mrs Chantal Ayemou, President of the Ivorian Network for the Defense of the Rights of Children and Women (RIDDEF).
3. We reiterate our support for the stabilisation and good offices efforts that the Special Representative of the Secretary General continues to deploy in the sub-region, with due respect for national sovereignty and the primary responsibility of States for peace and security.
4. We also welcome the regional approach to the climate-security nexus including through the launching of the Regional Working Group on climate change, environment, security, and development in West Africa. We believe this will help promote an integrated and harmonized solutions to climate change-related risks.
5. In this second half of 2021, the report under consideration calls for the following major observations on our part:
6. On the security front, we must commend the remarkable progress made in the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which has also been strengthened with a mechanism for monitoring and analysing civilian incidents (CITAC/MISAD). Predictable and sustainable support is urgently needed to ensure that it can continue to fulfil its mandate, essential for peace, which is a global public good.
7. However, we note a worrying deterioration of the security situation despite national, regional and international efforts. We also take note with concern the negative socioeconomic effects this insecurity continues to have on the economies in the region.

8. In order to adapt the response to the current challenges, an evaluation of these interventions should be carried out by the countries of the region with a view to identifying ways of harmonising and rationalising them.
9. The support of UNOWAS in this respect is crucial. It is also necessary to strengthen regional and sub-regional partnerships to deal with cross-border and cross-cutting threats to peace and security.
10. In the same vein, the 2020-2024 ECOWAS action plan for the eradication of terrorism should be further supported in terms of funding.
11. With regard to the phenomenon of drug trafficking, it should be recognised from the outset that the West African region is neither a producer nor a consumer of these drugs. It is simply a victim of its fragility in terms of security and border protection, which makes it a transit area. Consequently, as long as the regions of origin and final destination do not adequately assume their responsibilities to prevent production and find a sustainable solution to the increasing drug consumption, the efforts of the United Nations and the countries of West Africa will remain in vain.
12. In this regard, we welcome the significant efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in strengthening the capacities of national and sub-regional structures in charge of preventing and combating these illicit activities.

Mr. President,

13. On the humanitarian front, the effects of COVID 19 and food insecurity, high levels of displacement, and the adverse effects of climate change, which have increased at a worrying rate, call for urgent solidarity actions. However, while the vaccines gradually started reaching the region, there is a big concern about the slow pace of this process and the limited quantities received. We, therefore, underscore that timely delivery of vaccines is an urgent necessity. We must ensure that fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines remains a priority.
14. In addition, the A3+1 stresses the need for more contributions to the Humanitarian Response Plan for the Sahel, which as of mid-June has only received 16% of the \$2.7 billion required for its implementation.

15. The integration of the gendered dimension in the work of UNOWAS and efforts to increase women's full and meaningful participation in political and security processes is crucial and should further be encouraged.
16. We also encourage better coordination and accelerated implementation of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the UN Support Plan for the Sahel (UNSPS), and harmonization of actions with the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme.
17. With regard to the issue of internally displaced persons and refugees, we commend the efforts of the Nigerien authorities to create rapid and sustainable conditions for their effective return to their homes in the east of the country by December 2021, using national resources.

Mr. President,

18. In conclusion, on the political level, the A3+1 welcomes the democratic progress observed following the recent elections held in the region. We reaffirm the importance of political dialogue and consensus-building among stakeholders on national priorities, with a view to durable peaceful coexistence among the various communities of the sub-region.
19. In the same vein, the A3+1 commends the African Union support to the region as well as ECOWAS for its leadership in mediation, particularly in Mali and other countries in the region, as well as its significant efforts in promoting electoral processes in West Africa.

I thank you.