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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

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Report of the Secretary-General

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* [A/76/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution [75/86](#), commended the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity.
2. The General Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.
3. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-sixth session a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.
4. In this connection, a note verbale dated 18 February 2021 was sent to all Member States, requesting their views on the subject. To date, replies from the Governments of Albania, Algeria and Cyprus have been received and are reproduced in section II below. A reply from the European Union has been received and reproduced in section III below. Any views received after 31 May 2021 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in the original language received. No addenda will be issued.

II. Replies received from Governments

Albania

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[31 May 2021]

Albania is fully committed to a safe and secure region in the Mediterranean. In the field of arms transfers, Albania promotes full transparency by reporting information every year for the Register of Conventional Arms, the Arms Trade Treaty, the Regional Report on Arms Export (for countries in South-Eastern Europe) and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The Ministry of Defence of Albania is a participant in various regional initiatives and initiatives in the field of security and defence. Parties to these initiatives are some countries of the Mediterranean region. The focus is on cooperation and maintaining an open dialogue between the parties in order to strengthen relations and build mutual trust/confidence.

1. South-Eastern European Defence Ministerial process

In the second half of 2019, Albania assumed the chairmanship of the South-Eastern European Defence Ministerial (SEDM) secretariat. In the framework of this initiative, Albania has promoted the relevance of the SEDM process as a successful confidence-building mechanism in South-Eastern Europe, a platform that has

strengthened relations among our countries and has contributed to their efforts towards a common Euro-Atlantic future.

Some of the Albanian priorities are: consolidating the confidence-building mechanism; strengthening military cooperation in South-Eastern Europe; enhancing the level of interaction with other international organizations, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union and the United Nations; contributing to certain operations and missions with the Multinational Peace Force for South-Eastern Europe; enhancing the interoperability of the South-Eastern Europe Brigade and its capability to be deployed in peace support operations; and promoting an open-door policy in order to reaffirm our commitment to the openness of our initiative, which contributes to peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Albanian armed forces are engaged, through representatives, at the headquarters of the South-Eastern Europe Brigade and in the framework of the SEDM initiative.

2. United States-Adriatic Charter initiative

Through this initiative, Albania supports a policy of “open doors”, as well as the promotion of political dialogue and good neighbourliness, the increase of cooperation for joint representations, as well as efforts against terrorism and radical extremism.

3. Balkan Medical Task Force

The aim of the Balkan Medical Task Force is to enhance the utilization of existing military medical capabilities in the Western Balkans region in the framework of a multinational medical unit and to facilitate deployments and their sustainability for longer than one-year periods.

4. Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre Centre for Security Cooperation

The mission of the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre is to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in South-Eastern Europe through a partnership between the countries of the region and their international partners.

Also, in the framework of bilateral cooperation with countries of the region and beyond, the Ministry of Defence conducts continuous activities according to concrete joint cooperation plans. Even within the bilateral framework, the policy of the Ministry of Defence is to promote dialogue and cooperation.

Regarding its participation in international dual-use control regimes, Albania, through the State export control authority, has initiated internal procedures for assessing possible engagement in the Wassenaar Arrangement. The assessment was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as all other institutions that will be part of this process. During the prior assessment conducted by the Ministry of Defence, the export control authority and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded that Albania complied fully with the set application criteria.

However, the documentation process for fulfilling the application criteria and preparing the application file requires time, as an exhaustive list of elements for each criteria needs to be submitted, with information regarding the legislative framework, policies, technical issues and statistics.

The Ministry of Defence and the State export control authority are working on this process and are gathering all the information from all the institutions involved.

Also, Albania is part of the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative, which was launched in 2010. The Initiative is mirroring the action plan on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security implemented inside the European Union. The main objective of the Initiative is to facilitate regional cooperation in order to enhance capabilities.

Algeria

[Original: French]
[27 May 2021]

The adoption by the General Assembly, on 7 December 2020, of resolution [75/86](#) reaffirms the commitment of the States Members of the United Nations to the promotion of peace and the strengthening of cooperation and friendship among the peoples and countries of the Mediterranean region.

The security and cooperation situation in the Mediterranean region today makes it necessary to formulate a comprehensive collective strategy that is based on a cross-cutting approach to partnership and cooperation and includes all the initiatives intended to make the region an area of sustainable peace, stability and prosperity.

In this context, Algeria reiterates its commitment to working to strengthen economic, social and cultural cooperation in the Mediterranean region. In addition, it underscores the importance of a collective response to terrorism and transnational organized crime in order to address the multidimensional challenges facing all the countries in the region.

Faithful to its principles, Algeria has consistently called for the promotion and application of the principles of cooperation, friendship, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect in the Mediterranean region, to which it attaches great importance in its foreign policy.

It is an undeniable fact that the imperatives of security and stability have acquired a global dimension, necessitating interdependence among regions and States. In this connection, Algeria remains fully convinced of the fundamental principle of the indivisibility of security in the Mediterranean, which requires a collective cooperation strategy for development, stability and peace. In this context, it has always focused its efforts on the cultivation of lasting trust between the countries on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Since the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, held in Helsinki in 1975, Algeria has worked selflessly to promote peace, strengthen cooperation and consolidate friendship among the peoples and nations of the Mediterranean basin. For this reason, it believes that, since security is indivisible, any consideration of the future of the security system in the European region must include a Mediterranean dimension by default; this alone holds the promise of safeguarding the vital interests of the different countries in the region.

At the same time, it should be recognized that security and development in the Mediterranean are intrinsically linked to peace, security and development in Africa. There is no doubt that the vast array of security challenges in Africa threatens the peace and stability of its peoples and also has an impact on the Mediterranean region; in practice, this makes opportunities for cooperation between the two sides of the Mediterranean more complicated.

Consequently, the appropriate response to the security and cooperation situation in the Mediterranean region must be developed within a comprehensive framework, taking into account the political, security, economic and human interests and concerns of the countries on both shores.

With that in mind, Algeria recommends that the General Assembly adopt a draft resolution on the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region on a regular and ongoing basis. Through this resolution, Algeria is contributing to the shared resolve to strengthen cooperation on security, cultural and economic issues in the Mediterranean area.

Guided by principles based on the promotion of multilateralism and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, Algeria continues to contribute to various political processes, including those relating to the Libyan and Malian crises. In the same vein, it participates, by offering its experience, in the fight against terrorism and transnational crime in the Sahel region through active bilateral cooperation and an unwavering commitment to continental and international efforts in this area.

This collective action also extends to climate and migration issues. Indeed, of all the regions affected by climate change, the Mediterranean is especially vulnerable because of rising temperatures, declining rainfall, rising sea levels and an increase in the number of extreme weather events, leading to water and food shortages and jeopardizing stability in the region and beyond. Thus, the southern shores of the Mediterranean are severely affected by climate change, and its northern shores are already experiencing the societal effects of such change. For example, desertification in the Mediterranean is further increasing the migration pressures on the countries in the region.

Algeria has always affirmed its commitment to continuing to act in accordance with a comprehensive, concerted and balanced approach to the management of migration issues based on the need to address their root causes.

Accordingly, at the regional level, Algeria acts through various Mediterranean and African initiatives, which demonstrates its commitment to respecting its international obligations relating to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, reducing the negative effects of climate change and combating desertification.

The following are some examples of the commendable efforts made by Algeria to strengthen cooperation and security in the Mediterranean region.

I. Partnerships developed in the Mediterranean region

1. Western Mediterranean Forum (5+5 Dialogue)

On the Euro-Mediterranean front, Algeria sees the 5+5 Dialogue as an effective forum for strengthening security cooperation. Convinced that the security of the Mediterranean is inseparable from that of the European continent, Algeria believes that the security dimension and the legitimate concerns raised by the countries on the southern shores should be addressed within this framework.

Since the establishment of this dialogue and cooperation forum, of which it is an active member, Algeria has worked to promote a constructive dialogue that increasingly reflects the awareness among member countries of the peace and security challenges facing the region in particular, which clearly call for a holistic and united approach. Algeria is convinced that political dialogue within the Mediterranean area is the best way to find appropriate and effective solutions to the crises and trouble spots in the region and to develop and strengthen partnerships in the Western Mediterranean.

It should be noted that the meetings held to date within the framework of the 5+5 Dialogue have led to the adoption of specific measures to strengthen peace, security and stability. For example, important recommendations were adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 5+5 Dialogue, held in

Valletta in January 2019 and co-chaired by Algeria and Malta. The sixteenth meeting, held in 2020, was organized under the theme “Together for collective security and partnership in the Western Mediterranean”. At this meeting, Algeria emphasized the imperative of a comprehensive approach that incorporates a security dimension in order to combat criminal networks involved in trafficking in persons.

It should also be noted that all the measures envisaged by Algeria in this context take into consideration the link that exists between security and development, the leading role played by Algeria in the fight against terrorism and its contribution to stability and security in the region.

2. 5+5 Defence Initiative

Security and stability in the Mediterranean region are indivisible. The regional security cooperation that has taken place in recent decades to address challenges collectively, through a strengthened dialogue between the two sides of the Western Mediterranean, is of paramount importance.

The type of threats and risks that are faced makes it necessary to redefine the approach to national, regional and international security. In this context, Algeria is aiming not to succumb to the uncertainty caused by the vulnerabilities that have been identified and is prioritizing its own interests and security.

In an evolving and shifting context, Algeria must consolidate its position and role in order to reduce these vulnerabilities and contain the global threats by promoting dialogue and consultation through its contribution, within a consensus framework, to regional cooperation mechanisms. To this end, defence and security issues must be considered and addressed with a shared holistic approach based on solidarity and common interests. In this spirit, the 5+5 Dialogue functions as a specific and cross-cutting initiative for cooperation and multilateral development in the Western Mediterranean.

Cooperation exchange between the countries of the north and south of the Mediterranean is based on bilateralism. Outside these channels, the many regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Barcelona Process, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Mediterranean Dialogue of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Union for the Mediterranean, have produced limited action.

For example, the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue mainly involves one-way military action from north to south. With regard to the Union for the Mediterranean, the structural problems that undermine its work and particular disputes, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, hinder the efforts made by the countries involved to pursue a strategic approach to security and defence issues. The 5+5 Defense Initiative, by contrast, derives its added value from its informality, the flexibility of its work, pragmatism and consensus.

The fact that the 5+5 Defence Initiative is not used for political ends and that the countries involved are geographically and culturally close to one another have allowed for a strategic and functional approach to cooperation and a flexible mode of implementation with regard to defense and security.

Of course, the fact that the countries in the region are geographically close to one another increases their interdependence with regard to security issues. The threat from Daesh in Iraq and Syria has an impact on security in the Mediterranean area, and the recruitment of fighters is a major threat to all member countries. Combating organized crime also requires a sustained joint commitment.

The countries in the south and north of the Western Mediterranean cannot ignore the security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel. Political instability in the countries in the sub-Saharan region, the phenomenon of illegal immigration and its effects on society, transnational organized crime, trafficking in persons, arms and drugs, ever more acute underdevelopment, poverty, and the spread of diseases and epidemics provide a breeding ground for terrorism.

Drought, famine and water scarcity have especially severe consequences for development and the capacity of the affected countries to manage and protect communities and borders. The regions in question constitute an environment conducive to the development of terrorism and transnational organized crime, and these threats are passed on to North Africa and southern Europe.

Combating these risks therefore requires pursuing a united vision and action around a common strategy among the countries in the region based on consultation, cooperation and coordination.

Because of its geographical location, Algeria, which is affected by the challenges originating in the Sahel and in its border area, must anticipate, plan for, react to and influence developments in the region.

The current geostrategic context raises the fundamental question of risk and conflict management, which calls for the formulation of a new security strategy.

Against a regional and international backdrop that includes the fight against terrorism, transnational organized crime and “intense” illegal immigration, what sets the 5+5 Defence Initiative apart from other cooperation instruments in the area of security is its capacity to open up regular dialogue and effective and supportive military cooperation among member countries.

This defence and security partnership will enable the member countries of the 5+5 Defence Initiative to develop and share a common security vision for peace and stability in their geographical area.

The launch of the 5+5 Defence Initiative in Paris in December 2004 reflected a desire to contribute to the development of a shared defence and security vision for the 10 member countries through operational cooperation in the areas of maritime security, the contribution of the armed forces to civil defence, aviation security, training and academic research. These cooperation efforts have since been extended to include other areas.

Through the annual high-level meetings – such as the meeting of the ministers of defence, which sets out the strategic guidelines for future activities under the 5+5 Defence Initiative, the meeting of the chiefs of staff of the armed forces, which establishes the operational activities, including exercises, meetings and workshops in the fields of maritime safety, aviation security, the contribution of the armed forces to civil defence, cyberdefence and cybercrime, the meetings of the joint chiefs of staff of the air force and navy, meetings of the directors of the military health services and meetings of the Steering Committee – the Initiative has taken on an importance that has contributed towards raising its profile in the Mediterranean area and forms a bridge between the countries on both shores of the Western Mediterranean, thereby lending it added value that strengthens its effectiveness on the basis of common interests.

The consistent policies appropriate to the security concerns in the Western Mediterranean, implemented through annual plans, enable the parties to become aware of the issues involved based on participatory and united approaches to setting priorities and giving responses that meet the needs and reflect the views of the member countries. The Seaborder maritime surveillance and security, accidental

marine pollution, search and rescue, and Circaete air safety exercises as well as the contribution of the armed forces to the management of natural disasters have made it possible over the years to ensure the interoperability and use of military means on the basis of common procedure manuals drawn up between the armed forces of the member countries.

In an informal context, the 5+5 Defence Initiative, a focused *de facto* arrangement based on the free will of the parties, unanimous consensus and pragmatism, has been set up as a model for balanced cooperation with a shared understanding of common interests without institutional constraints. The flexibility in its procedures makes this forum effective in achieving an adequate level of cooperation.

The benefits of such cooperation remain substantial and appreciable in view of the cross-cutting approach of the dialogue established, the identification of security issues and challenges in the region and the actions undertaken to implement mutually shared objectives. Its *modus operandi* has provided the forum of the 5+5 Defence Initiative with a functional identity and broad agreement on risk assessment.

The cooperation fostered by this forum in the areas of maritime security, the contribution of the armed forces towards civil defence in the event of natural disasters, air safety and training and academic research has been extended to cyberdefence, addressing marine pollution, search and rescue, urgent medical needs, climate change and its security implications, the special forces, drones, mitigating threats from improvised explosive devices and also gender equality and equal opportunity issues in the armed forces.

Algeria requested in December 2020 and March 2021 the introduction of water stress as an area of cooperation in view of the seriousness of this major phenomenon, which is a source of political, security, health and economic disorder.

Indeed, the Mediterranean is considered as a sensitive geographical area characterized by its great vulnerability and exposure to climate change and affected by phenomena such as soil degradation, desertification and water scarcity. Added to this is the flight of populations from the Sahel. The scarcity of water puts into perspective the great many conflicts and incentives for migration movements from the South to the North.

The 5+5 Defence Initiative member countries are fully involved in this process of recognition of water stress.

Furthermore, due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its impact on the health of populations, Algeria has highlighted the importance of a meeting of the directors of the military health services of the member countries, to share their experiences in the face of this worldwide health risk by approaching these issues from a security perspective. Such an approach could lead to a new regional health order if member countries intensified their cooperation.

It would also be advisable for member countries to consider setting up a system devoted to training and management of epidemics and pandemics in order to share experiences and knowledge acquired in this area.

National policies could be complemented by multilateral cooperation agreements on health and bring substantial value to the development of the 5+5 Dialogue.

Taking account of these two issues (water stress and the COVID-19 pandemic) constitutes an essential step that requires clearly assessing the consequences and identifying the measures to be taken and determining the limits and the risks entailed.

Despite the geopolitical asymmetry between the countries of the two shores of the Western Mediterranean, the fields of action covered by the 5+5 Defence Initiative adds value to regional cooperation. This value added could also be enhanced by being combined with the action of other components of the 5+5 Dialogue for issues with an interministerial dimension.

With respect to cooperation under the 5+5 Defence Initiative, Algeria, as a member country, organized 69 out of a total 452 activities between 2005 and 2020, including exercises, training modules, academic studies, seminars and meetings. Algeria twice assumed the presidency of this forum, the first time in 2005 and the second in 2016.

Algeria took part in drafting four manuals on common procedures for maritime and air exercises and natural disaster management and has been an active partner in the development of promising projects, including: the 5+5 Defence College; the Euro-Maghreb Centre for Research and Strategic Studies; the 5+5 humanitarian demining training project; the non-permanent Operational Planning and Coordination Centre for Natural Disaster Management; and the Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre (V-RMTC).

3. NATO Mediterranean Dialogue

In March 2000, Algeria joined the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue with the aim of contributing to the strengthening of collective security in the Mediterranean area, on the basis of a comprehensive approach that complements other various initiatives and frameworks for dialogue in the Mediterranean. Within this framework, a third individual partnership and cooperation programme was signed on 22 April 2021 between Algeria and NATO.

4. High-level strategic dialogue on regional security and counter-terrorism

Algeria and the European Union established the Subcommittee on Political Dialogue, Security and Human rights under the Association Agreement concluded between them, which meets once a year, alternating between Algiers and Brussels, to discuss major security issues of common interest. The last meeting of the Subcommittee was held on 19 October 2020.

The two parties also adopted, in 2017, five common partnership priorities, including one related to strategic and security dialogue.

Downstream and in support of this mechanism, Algeria and the European Union have begun a high-level strategic dialogue in the field of regional security. The first session was held in Brussels in October 2017 and the second in Algiers on 12 November 2018. This forum provides a regular opportunity for extensive consultation on the major international and regional issues of the day and on global challenges such as terrorism, the environment and migration.

It should also be added that the European Union–Algeria Association Council is a framework for political dialogue, cooperation and exchange on security issues between the two parties. They exchange their analyses of the many crises in the region, particularly in Libya and the Sahel, and of the efforts made to combat radicalization, prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism. The last session of the Council, co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, was held on 7 December 2020 and provided an opportunity to discuss issues related to Western Sahara, Libya, Mali and the Sahel.

5. OSCE Mediterranean dialogue

As a Mediterranean Partner, Algeria participates actively in the activities of OSCE in the Mediterranean region, including those relating to counter-terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization and transnational organized crime, migration and trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

OSCE should thus further highlight the crucial importance of the Mediterranean for peace and security in Europe by raising the political profile of activities to promote stability and security in the Mediterranean region and emphasizing the capacity of Mediterranean countries of the southern shore to make a contribution as active and committed partners in the stabilization of this region of the world.

6. Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centre of Excellence Centre for the region of North Africa and the Sahel

The European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative is aimed at promoting and increasing cooperation between the countries of North Africa and the Sahel and countries of the European Union to manage and reduce risks arising from nuclear, radiological, biological and chemical materials. This initiative is also aimed at developing and implementing a coherent and coordinated strategy to strengthen the institutional capacities of the countries in the region to better secure the borders against the smuggling of these materials.

Since its inauguration in Algiers, in December 2015, the regional office for North Africa and the Sahel of the Centres of Excellence Initiative has launched a number of cooperation projects in the area. The most recent projects concern cooperation in the detection of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials at border posts, land transport of chemical and biological products, and chemical and biological waste management.

Algeria proposed to launch a project on the regional harmonization of national lists of hazardous chemicals and the traceability of these products in order to effectively combat their diversion for malicious purposes. This proposal was welcomed within the Centres of Excellence Initiative.

The energy of the regional office was rewarded with the 2019 prize for the best "success story" action, given by the European partner to the North Africa and Sahel region, following the completion of several training exercises and awareness-raising sessions provided by local experts trained under this initiative and of South-South cooperation.

Led by Algeria, the North Africa and Sahel regional office covers the following countries: Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Morocco, the Niger and Tunisia. It will soon welcome Chad as a new member. Such an expansion will make it possible to cover the entire Sahel region and to understand, as fully as possible, the dangers linked to the use of chemical, biological radiological or nuclear materials in this sensitive region of the African continent.

7. CyberSouth regional project on cybercrime with the Mediterranean countries

Given the implications of cybercrime for security in the Mediterranean, Algeria is involved in the development of a joint project with the European Union and the Council of Europe, with the aim of building capacity with respect to cybercrime and electronic evidence in the Mediterranean region.

Within the framework of this project, Algeria participated in the work of the third meeting of the Steering Committee of the CyberSouth project, held in virtual

format in December 2020, on cybercrime. The activities planned within the framework of this regional project, initially for a period of three years, have been extended until the end of December 2021 and are currently being implemented.

8. Regional cooperation on arms export control

Together with the countries of North Africa, Algeria is participating in arms export control activities launched by the European Union with the aim of promoting regional dialogue and discussing topics of common interest on the matter among the partner countries concerned.

In this respect, Algeria is participating in the fifth phase of the European Union awareness-raising programme on the promotion of effective arms export controls, which will run from 2021 to 2022.

Algeria regularly participates in various European Union activities aimed at combating illicit arms transfers, in particular small arms and light weapons. In this context, in October 2019, it hosted the fourth interregional seminar for countries of North Africa and countries within the framework of the European neighbourhood policy on arms export controls, organized with the financial and technical assistance of the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control of Germany. The seminar provided an opportunity to promote regional dialogue on arms export controls and to raise issues of common interest in this area among the partner countries concerned.

9. Cooperation with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)

Cooperation is being developed between Algeria and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training in all areas involving emerging crimes, in particular cyberthreats, the collection and analysis of criminal data, and the fight against terrorism and related crimes. As part of its participation in regional projects organized by the Agency, Algeria is taking part in the Counter-Terrorism Information Exchange and Criminal Justice Responses (CT INFLOW) project, which deals with the exchange of information on counter-terrorism and criminal justice policies.

The partnership between Algeria and the Agency has taken the form of an exchange programme under the regional cooperation project entitled the “European Union–Middle East and North Africa Counter-Terrorism Training Partnership Project (CEPOL CT)”. The first phase was conducted between 2015 and 2017 and the second between 2018 and 2020. Within this context, Algeria and CEPOL jointly organized a regional workshop on terrorism in relation to organized crime in March 2020 in Algiers, which was attended by representatives of all European Union member States and the CEPOL Mediterranean partner countries.

At the same time, Algeria has taken part in the four editions of the regional Euro-Mediterranean Partnership police project.

II. Initiatives launched on the African continent

Convinced of the links between the Mediterranean and Africa in the area of security, Algeria has consistently advocated for the strengthening and support of the existing mechanisms in Africa, particularly those described below, by the international organizations concerned, in particular the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union.

1. Efforts by Algeria to combat terrorism in the Sahel

The resurgence of terrorist attacks in the Sahel-Saharan strip has increased the risks and multifaceted threats in this region, despite the relentless efforts to counter them and the constant pressure meticulously exerted by the security forces of Algeria and other countries in the region.

In the face of this situation, since 2007, Algeria has initiated and established effective regional cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism in the Sahel region. This initiative includes a strategic and military operational framework and the launch of economic and social development programmes for the inhabitants of the regions concerned.

Several high-level meetings have been held to discuss and identify the measures needed to combat terrorist activities and related scourges in the region. A series of meetings of the chiefs of staff of the armed forces and security services of the countries of the region has also been held with a view to implementing practical and viable measures to ensure coordination among the security forces of the countries concerned.

This cooperation framework has also made it possible to set up training programmes for security agents and customs services, provided by Algeria for the benefit of the countries of the region in order to enable them to develop their own administrative, technical and operational capacities in this field.

On the basis of its own experience, Algeria remains fully aware of the necessary central role of a structural prevention and early warning system, through the strengthening of information exchange and judicial cooperation between the affected States in its various membership circles, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of cooperation within the framework of the African Union Nouakchott Process and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Lastly, the experience of Algeria in deradicalization serves as a clear example of how to successfully neutralize terrorism. In this respect, one measure introduced by Algeria was the establishment of the association of imams and preachers from the Sahel-Sahara region, which is aimed at promoting the true values of Islam and preventing extremism through dialogue and education.

2. African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism

The African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism, an African Union body based in Algiers, plays an important role in preventing and combating terrorism and related phenomena, such as illicit trafficking in light arms and small weapons.

Considered a key operational body whose work forms part of a comprehensive and integrated approach, the Centre reflects the firm will of African States to join forces with the international community to take concrete, urgent and collective action to stop terrorism, in particular through the consolidation of data and research on terrorism.

To this end, since its establishment, the Centre has organized several meetings and workshops for experts from several countries and regional organizations on issues related to cross-border arms trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. These workshops have led to the drafting of several recommendations to strengthen the capacities of the countries concerned in the area of cross-border control and the fight against arms trafficking.

3. African Police Cooperation Organization (AFRIPOL)

Established in 2016 and based in Algiers, the African Police Cooperation Organization is a regional cooperation tool intended to strengthen security and peace in Africa through a harmonized African strategy for combating crime. This form of police cooperation covers the design, implementation, evaluation and coordination, particularly within the framework of support and assistance programmes initiated by the relevant international organizations.

The goal of this mechanism is to develop and strengthen the capacities of African police forces, including through targeted training programmes for forensic police officers tailored to African contexts, the evaluation of criminal threats and the fight against cybercrime and illicit trafficking in arms and drugs. It is also aimed at building African capacities in strengthening and coordinating police forces deployed in connection with peacekeeping operations.

In addition, AFRIPOL maintains close cooperation with similar organizations, notably the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol). It is seen as a mechanism for police cooperation between African Union countries, but also as an important actor in the security of the Mediterranean region and a potential focal point for the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean basin.

Notwithstanding the postponement of the fourth General Assembly of AFRIPOL, scheduled to take place in Abuja in October 2020, due to the health restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Algeria, in its capacity as President of the General Assembly, organized on 11 March 2021 the eighth meeting of the AFRIPOL Steering Committee and, on 15 and 16 March 2021, the second meeting of the heads of the Organization's national liaison offices, with a view to examining the functional and organizational aspects of improving cooperation between police agencies of the African Union States in the fight against terrorism, organized crime and new transnational threats.

Cyprus

[Original: English]
[25 May 2021]

The stability of the Mediterranean region is a priority for Cyprus and, as a matter of policy, Cyprus seeks to cooperate with all willing partners who share this historical crossroad in order to ensure that security is achieved. The immediate focus of Cypriot priorities is, naturally, the Eastern Mediterranean. Good neighbourly relations and respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of law are the fundamental principles that underpin the policies of Cyprus in its neighbourhood. This principled stance has not always been welcomed or reciprocated by all our neighbours, a fact reflected in the violated sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus as a result of the actions by one specific neighbour, in clear violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

In promoting the objective of long-lasting stability, Cyprus has advanced a policy of establishing, jointly with Greece, trilateral mechanisms of cooperation with its neighbours in the Eastern Mediterranean. These interactions have begun to have tangible results across a broad spectrum of cooperation areas, including energy, counter-terrorism, the environment, cybertechnology and innovation, education and many more. These mechanisms have proved resilient and flexible and have attracted strong interest from near and far, with partners including France, Italy, the United States, the European Union and other regional partners.

Recognizing the significance of energy for many of its regional partners, Cyprus has also concluded bilateral agreements with its neighbours in order to delineate its exclusive economic zone in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Such agreements, signed with Egypt, Israel and Lebanon, have proved essential in structuring a rules-based nexus of peaceful cooperation. Regrettably, not all countries in the region respect international law and the sovereign rights of their neighbours, choosing instead to pursue policies of force to the detriment of all in the region.

A major issue of concern during the past few years has been that of irregular migration. Cyprus has experienced a significant upsurge in arrivals. Beyond the obvious economic ramifications, this has also raised concerns regarding the movement of terrorists under the guise of bona fide migrants. While Cyprus is committed to assisting those in need, in full respect of its international obligations, countering terrorism has been a central tenant of the national security strategy and Cyprus shares this concern by cooperating closely with its regional, European Union and international partners.

III. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]

[31 May 2021]

The strengthening of security and internal regional cooperation in the Mediterranean, as well as in the broader Middle East, remains high on the European agenda. A democratic, more stable, greener and more prosperous southern neighbourhood is a strategic priority for the European Union. Twenty-five years after the launch of the Barcelona Process, the European Union is determined to reinforce and further develop the strategic partnership between the European Union and its southern neighbourhood partners. To this end, and within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, on 9 February 2021 the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy adopted a joint communication proposing an ambitious and innovative new agenda for the Mediterranean. The Joint Communication is based on an intensified political dialogue across the Mediterranean and aims at tackling common challenges and taking advantage of shared opportunities. The agenda is a renewed commitment to the rule of law, human and fundamental rights, equality, democracy, good governance, peace and stability. It aims to achieve a resilient and just post-pandemic recovery, as well as a green, digital transition in the Mediterranean region. Moreover, jointly addressing the challenges of forced displacement and irregular migration and seizing the benefits of legal migration efficiently and effectively, through comprehensive, tailor-made and mutually beneficial partnerships, protecting migrants' and refugees' rights is a key priority. Efforts will continue to be made to enhance regional cooperation, with the Union for the Mediterranean as a focal point, and to support subregional and interregional cooperation, notably with African partners. In this context, the European Union will explore further regional, subregional or trilateral cooperation and joint initiatives between partner countries across the board.

The protracted conflicts in the Mediterranean region constitute a key obstacle to political stability and sustainable development. Joint efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, promote security cooperation, mitigate the consequences of conflicts and address their root causes are paramount priorities. The European Union is a main provider of humanitarian and development assistance in the region and is able to deploy a wide range of instruments in a triple nexus humanitarian-development-peace approach. As a security provider, the European Union is deploying military and

civilian Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations, mediation and stabilization actions, as well as restrictive measures. The new agenda for the Mediterranean proposes to further develop partnerships on security matters with neighbouring countries, looking also at the recent threats, such as hybrid threats, cyberthreats and organized crime, that are emerging in the region and elsewhere. Through the new agenda, the European Union proposes to enhance operational cooperation with our partners, including for maritime security and coastguard cooperation. Such partnerships should be tailor-made, correspond to partners' respective needs and enjoy high-level political support in order to guarantee concrete results. Cooperation with regional and international organizations is also vital, including with NATO in the framework of the joint European Union-NATO joint declarations made in Warsaw and Brussels. The European Union and its southern neighbourhood partners share a common interest in supporting a revitalized and fit-for-purpose multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. The European Union is keen to engage with its southern neighbourhood partners in multilateral forums, notably on climate change, peace and security and the global issues that form the basis of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. It is also keen to engage in strengthening rules-based trade, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights and international law.

Where possible, the European Union has cooperated with southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries on political, economic, security and civil society matters and the European Union has maintained its position as the region's largest donor and foreign aid provider.

Work on implementing priorities for partnerships has continued, including in the area of counter-terrorism and security, as well as on supporting structural socioeconomic reforms.

The European Union has continued to cooperate with its southern partners on tackling terrorism and preventing radicalization leading to violent extremism by supporting institutional capacity-building and the development of relevant legislation. Through regional financing programmes that address counter-terrorism and related areas, the European Union has brought together partners from the region to jointly tackle the multiple threats that affect not only the region but also the European Union. Security and counter-terrorism dialogues at the technical level have been conducted in the region despite the public health constraints. For example, the European Union-Tunisia subcommittee on justice and security held a meeting in March 2021 and the European Union-Algeria subcommittee on political dialogue, security and human rights held a meeting in October 2020. The work of counter-terrorism and security experts continues within European Union delegations, with the direct support of member States, contributing to a better situational awareness of local context, a deepening engagement with the respective authorities and the definition of targeted cooperation programmes. These efforts also act as a reference point for counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism matters for local and international counterparts, for example in donor coordination platforms or the meetings of the Global Counterterrorism Forum meetings.

Migration continues to be a top priority for the European Union and its partners in the region. Work is ongoing to save lives, tackle the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, protect Europe's external borders and further strengthen cooperation with international partners in the Mediterranean region and beyond. The principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility arising from the Valletta Summit on Migration, held in November 2015, will continue to guide the response of the European Union and its African partners. The most recent initiatives in this domain include the enlargement of the competencies of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. The European Union asylum system has

been upgraded with identification databases such as Eurodac. Surveillance has been enhanced through the European Travel Information and Authorization System (a smart border management system) and the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR). Security forces have engaged in joint cooperation exercises such as the European test bed for the maritime Common Information Sharing Environment (EUCISE) 2020 and the Early Warning for Increased Situational Awareness project, specifically within maritime and border cooperation, as well as the Marine-Earth Observation programme, which applies data from the Copernicus programme to maritime security.

A regional initiative covering the two shores dealing with migration is the Rabat Process, wherein European Union member States cooperate with countries from the Mediterranean basin on migration management, as laid down in the 2018 Marrakech action plan.

The European Union supports United Nations activities in this region through funding and technical cooperation. This applies specifically to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration, with both of which it works, also in the framework of the African Union-European Union-United Nations task force on Libya.

Part of the support on security provided by the European Union addressed the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks in the region. During 2020, in this framework, the European Union showed flexibility by responding at short notice to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in several countries.

The Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations that are active along the main migratory routes are enhancing capacity in the region to address local challenges, including those linked to irregular migration, and contributing ultimately to regional stability. From 2015 to early 2020, the European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean contributed to European Union efforts for the return of stability and security in Libya and maritime security in the Central Mediterranean region by disrupting the business model of migrant smugglers and human traffickers, training and monitoring the Libyan coastguard and contributing to the implementation of the United Nations arms embargo. The European Union military operation in the Mediterranean was adopted in 2020 as its successor operation with an adjusted primary focus on the implementation of the United Nations arms embargo pursuant to Security Council resolutions [1970 \(2011\)](#) and [2292 \(2016\)](#) and of United Nations measures against the illicit export of petroleum from Libya, capacity-building and training of the Libyan coastguard and navy.

In parallel, the European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya supports the Libyan authorities in their efforts to disrupt organized criminal networks involved in the smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and terrorism. The Mission works with the Libyan authorities on border management, law enforcement and criminal justice and coordinates between donors supporting the needs of Libya in these areas.

The European Union expresses concern about the instrumentalization by third parties of the migrant pressure along the Eastern Mediterranean migration route, as well as the spread of disinformation and fake news regarding the plight of people using that route. In that respect, it is of the utmost importance to enhance cooperation and partners' ability to address these challenges.

The new agenda for the Mediterranean includes a dedicated economic and investment plan to spur long-term socioeconomic recovery in the southern neighbourhood. Under the new European Union Neighbourhood, Development and

International Cooperation Instrument, up to €7 billion for the period 2021–2027 would be allocated to its implementation, which could mobilize up to €30 billion in private and public investment in the region during the next decade. Other major financial instruments touching the Mediterranean region include the European Union external investment plan, which was adopted in September 2017 and was inspired by the European Fund for Strategic Investments. It supports investment in African and European neighbourhood countries.

The fifth Brussels conference on the future of the Syrian Arab Republic and the region, co-chaired by the European Union and the United Nations and held on 30 March 2021, sent a strong signal of continued commitment to the Syrian people. The European Union continues to call for a political solution to the Syrian conflict in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). The European Union as a whole remains the largest donor for the response to the Syrian crisis, having allocated €3.7 billion in total for 2021 and beyond. The European Union supports the search for a sustainable solution for Syrian refugees, which can only be based on their voluntary, safe and dignified return to their places of origin when conditions on the ground, as defined by UNHCR, will allow it.

European Union support for the Sahel region is critical to stability in the Mediterranean. The European Union has gradually increased support for the region. The fight against terrorism, support for the countries' defence and internal security capabilities, restoration of the presence of the State in fragile areas, long-term development and the humanitarian response are the European Union's main areas of commitment. Particular support has been awarded to the Group of Five for the Sahel, created in 2014, and its joint force, created in 2017. European Union presence includes the military and civilian Common Security and Defence Policy missions in the region – specifically, the missions in Mali and the Niger (EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUCAP Sahel Niger), as well as the European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian armed forces (EUTM Mali) – and the deployment of European Union member State experts.

The European Union has joined the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the African Union to form the Libya Quartet, with the objective of contributing to efforts to find a solution to the crisis.

As OSCE participating States, the States members of the European Union continue to foster cooperation and dialogue on wider security issues through the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Priority areas in this forum include countering radicalization and terrorism, boarder security, migration management and non-discrimination.

The European Union stresses the importance for regional peace and stability of the respect for: (a) the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction that each State has over its maritime zones in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and (b) the principle of good neighbourly relations. The European Union stresses that any activities contravening international law and contradicting good neighbourly relations, as well as provocative public statements, are not conducive to easing tensions and creating a positive environment for regional stability.

Political dialogue has been further intensified with regional partners such as the League of Arab States. Under the European Union-League of Arab States strategic dialogue launched in November 2015, work has continued in the joint working groups and at the diplomatic and ministerial levels, building on the summit held in February 2019. The European Union also seeks to work with the Gulf States in addressing challenges in the region, notably those involving Libya, the Middle East Peace Process, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area funds projects for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the Mediterranean. The European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Centres of Excellence in the Mediterranean area, including those in Algeria and Morocco, contribute to these tasks.
