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Seventy-fourth year

8670th meeting

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Allen	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Germany	Mr. Schulz
	Indonesia	Mr. Syihab
	Kuwait	Mr. Albanai
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	South Africa	Mr. Matjila
	United States of America	Mr. Barkin

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2019/868)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (S/2019/868)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burkina Faso to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Security Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burkina Faso.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations; Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa, European External Action Service; and Ms. Assitan Diallo, Association of African Women for Research and Development.

Mr. Vervaeke and Ms. Diallo are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Brussels and Bamako, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/868, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to update the Security Council on the activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), including the international support it enjoys, especially from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), as well as the challenges facing the Force and the possible

measures that could be envisaged in that regard. I have just returned from the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security, during which the issue of increasing the strength of the Joint Force and improving its relations with MINUSMA was widely discussed. I will return to that point later in my briefing.

The security situation in the Sahel continued to deteriorate over the past six months. Attacks attributed to or claimed by terrorist groups against security forces and civilian populations increased, as did violent incidents involving members of various communities. On 6 November, in Bounboua, north-eastern Burkina Faso, approximately 40 civilians and soldiers were killed in an attack by terrorist groups. Nearly 100 elements of the security forces of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger lost their lives in a series of attacks targeting the Liptako-Gourma triangle over the past 10 days. And, on 18 November, 24 soldiers belonging to the Malian armed forces died in a counter-terrorist operation near Tabankort in northern Mali, close to the Nigerian border.

In total, since the beginning of this year, security incidents have tripled in the region as compared to last year, particularly in Burkina Faso and the Niger. Four hundred and eighty-nine incidents were recorded in Burkina Faso this year, as compared to 151 last year. Two-hundred and eighteen have occurred in the Niger this year, versus 69 at the same time last year. In addition, violence caused by terrorist groups in the Sahel is now spreading to countries on the West African coast and along a Sahelo-Sahara strip and virtually links the Joint Force's areas of operation with those of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad basin. That fact was recently noted by many representatives of the countries of the subregion in Dakar, who warned against the risk of collapse of the security cordon in the region. In that connection, the Heads of State of Mauritania and Senegal have renewed calls for a robust mandate for the Joint Force.

(spoke in English)

The situation in the Sahel is of serious concern, and urgent action is needed. It is therefore encouraging that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force has increased its operational tempo. I welcome the commitment and determination of the G-5 Sahel countries to overcome the many challenges they face in operationalizing the Joint Force. Since the issuance of the Secretary-General's report before the Council (S/2019/868), the Joint Force

conducted an additional operation in collaboration with the French forces. The operation took place in the border area between Mali and Burkina Faso from 1 to 17 November. It involved 1,400 foreign troops — from Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger — working alongside the French forces, and resulted in the neutralization of 24 suspected terrorists and the seizure of weapons, ammunition, 100 telephones and 64 vehicles.

The terrorist attacks on the Joint Force base in Boulikessi, in the Mopti region of central Mali, and on the Malian armed forces post in Mondoro, on 3 September, which resulted in the killing of dozens of soldiers, was a painful reminder of the dangerous environment in which the Joint Force and other security forces are operating in the Sahel. I would like to pay tribute to the courage and dedication of the personnel operating under the Joint Force in the fight against terrorism, as well as to remember those who have paid the ultimate price for their countries.

The Joint Force remains a critical part of a series of regional and international security responses to address extremist groups in the Sahel along with other cross-border challenges, including trafficking — in persons, illicit goods, weapons and drugs — migration and displacement. However, the Joint Force alone cannot secure the Sahel. More needs to be done to prevent further deterioration of the situation. To that end, I welcome the recent encouraging international and regional initiatives to respond to the expanding threat posed by terrorist armed groups in the Sahel. One such initiative is a new partnership for security and stability in the Sahel, announced in August by the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, and the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, on the margins of the Group of Seven Summit held in Biarritz, France. The initiative is aimed at reinforcing troop and police forces from G-5 Sahel countries at the national level, which will play an instrumental role in combating terrorism.

Another important initiative to combat growing insecurity and terrorism was announced by the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States meeting in Ouagadougou on 14 September. Their pledge of \$1 billion to fight terrorism and extremism over the next five years is a sign of the renewed commitment to take ownership and find solutions to the challenges facing their countries. In parallel, it will remain critical to continue supporting the efforts by the Joint Force, as well as mobilizing external partners to that end.

Resolution 2480 (2019), adopted on 28 June, lifted geographical restrictions on the provision of water, rations and fuel to all battalions of the Joint Force. MINUSMA has taken swift action to provide the required support. On 3 October, the Joint Force requested 429,000 litres of fuel and oil and 35,000 rations for all its battalions in all five countries. In response, after completing a risk assessment under the United Nations human rights due-diligence policy, MINUSMA began delivering the requested items. So far, it has delivered 60,000 litres of fuel and 4,500 rations to designated collection points in Mali. MINUSMA stands ready to deliver the rest of the support as soon as the contingents confirm their readiness to receive the items.

The delivery of life-support consumables to all contingents operating under the Joint Force has the potential to help the Joint Force enhance performance and operate more effectively. However, more equipment, capabilities, such as air assets, and training will be needed for the Joint Force to make a difference on the ground. In that regard, I wish to recall that the provision of support to the Joint Force by MINUSMA, as mandated in resolutions 2391 (2017) and 2480 (2019), was and should remain one of several assistance mechanisms for enhancing the G-5 Joint Force's capacity.

In addition, I would like to welcome the efforts of the Joint Force to implement the human rights and international law compliance framework, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other partners. It is of critical importance that the Joint Force and the member States of the G-5 Sahel continue to take all the necessary measures to ensure that the protection and security of the civilian population remain at the centre of their security efforts, both under the Joint Force and at the national level.

Furthermore, we call on the Joint Force and G-5 Sahel countries to ensure that allegations of human rights violations involving Joint Force contingents are fully investigated, as they not only undermine the population's trust but also the image and reputation of the Joint Force and that of national security forces and, ultimately, the very purpose of such military operations. I am pleased to note the efforts undertaken to operationalize the police component of the Joint Force in operations related to fighting terrorism and transnational organized crime. The police component has an integral role to play in implementing the

Joint Force compliance framework and investigating allegations of human rights violations by members of the Joint Force.

(spoke in French)

Terrorism today is a shared problem, a problem for all. No country can face it alone. In that connection, I would recall that most G-5 Sahel countries already spend almost 20 per cent of their national budgets on defence and security, which, however essential to addressing the root causes of insecurity, means a decline in investment in human security.

The international community must therefore contribute to the effort to fight extremism in the Sahel. It must support the Joint Force so that it can fully play its role and achieve more tangible results on the ground. It is important that funding promises be kept. I would like to acknowledge the contribution made in that regard by the European Union and other international partners, whose support for the Joint Force is crucial and vital. Once again, I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for predictable and sustainable funding for the Joint Force.

Security initiatives will bear fruit only if satisfactory responses are delivered on issues related to underdevelopment, poverty, governance, the lack of access to basic services, systematic exclusion and the effects of climate change. We must offer people, especially youth, opportunities for the future. Those prospects must go beyond daily needs, to ensure development, promote gender equality and facilitate access to economic opportunities and social services. That is why I call on all partners to ensure the rapid disbursement of the pledged funds and to support the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Investing in sustainable and inclusive development efforts is the most effective way to address the root causes of conflict, violent extremism and terrorism.

Lastly, I call on the Governments of the region to go beyond security response and continue to establish mechanisms and implement reforms to bolster national unity and cohesion. That must be the thrust of the partnership to be shored up in the fight against terrorism, insecurity and inequality. Together, we must mobilize more, as a matter of urgency, for the Sahel.

The President: I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Barry (Burkina Faso) *(spoke in French)*: Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on behalf of all my colleagues in the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting us to take part in this meeting on the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel (S/2019/868). Rest assured of the full support of the G-5 Sahel countries.

Through Ms. Keita, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for the quality of his report, which was just presented to us. We take due note of the relevant observations and recommendations included in the report, which illustrate the grim reality on the ground as well as the commitment of the United Nations to remain alongside the Sahel region, one that has been assailed by ongoing terrorist attacks. Together with the United Nations, many multilateral and bilateral partners support the efforts of Member States to operationalize the Joint Force on the ground. First and foremost, I would like to mention the European Union, whose financial support makes it possible to implement the technical agreement with the United Nations in terms of logistics and supplies for the Force.

As the report rightly points out, the situation in the G-5 Sahel region is most worrisome. The heavy human toll during the reporting period has now been surpassed. The security situation in the G-5 Sahel region has deteriorated significantly in recent months. Attacks and ambushes have proliferated and claimed more lives in less time than in the past. The enemy has become more active, mainly in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Chad, while the Joint Force, which is still scaling up, continues to grapple with recurrent functional obstacles. In concrete terms, armed terrorist groups have redoubled their activities against the security and defence forces, the civilian population and symbols of the State, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

The numerous improvised explosive device attacks recorded in the area for some time now serve to confirm that those armed terrorist groups are experienced in the manufacture and use of improvised explosive devices. That also points to their strong determination to exert enormous pressure on our forces. Attacks on, and the destruction of, public buildings ultimately aim to prevent any presence of the State and its entities in various areas. That is already the case with whole areas

that do not have direct administrative authority, security nearby or schools and health centres. Terrorists aim to control and exploit those areas and communities for their benefit in order to pursue their illegal activities, while maintaining a stranglehold over the local populations. Their dream to establish an actual haven or caliphate in the Liptako-Gourma region — the border areas of Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger — is a timelier issue than ever.

In the wake of the complex attacks on positions in Koutoukou in Burkina Faso, and Boulikessi and Mondoro in Mali, it is reasonable to believe that there are genuine operational and logistical ties among the various armed terrorist groups in the Sahel that are affiliated with Al-Qaida and the Islamic State. Undoubtedly, those terrorist operations are becoming increasingly numerous and meticulously prepared.

The last few weeks have been particularly trying for Mali and Burkina Faso, notably following the heavy losses suffered by the Malian army in Indelimane at the beginning of this month and again the day before yesterday south of Ménaka. On the Burkinabe side, we are still recovering from the shock of the cowardly and barbaric murder of the Deputy Mayor of Djibo earlier this month and a few days later from the particularly bloody attack on a convoy of workers from the SEMAFO mining company in Boungou, in the eastern part of the country.

That enemy pressure calls for greater efforts on the part of our States and their respective armies. As for the Joint Force, in spite of the difficulties encountered, it has been able to carry out a number of operations to mark its presence and commitment. There were eight such operations during the first half of 2019, which focused on three zones. The activities planned for the third quarter of the year were well carried out. For the final quarter of the year, despite the difficulties associated with relief operations and the rainy season in some areas, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force has committed to three joint operations with national armies and partner forces.

In that context, a large-scale operation called Operation Amane 2 took place from 1 to 10 October in the central zone. It was part of the overall aim to deter, break up and interfere with the logistical flow of organized criminal groups and armed terrorist groups in the Libyan border area between Chad and the Niger. During that operation, different missions

and procedures were implemented, including reconnaissance, zone control, checkpoint, interception, neutralization, disruption, compilation, escort, battle rations release and air transport.

In addition, during the first two weeks of November, the Joint Force conducted a major operation supported by Operation Barkhane, jointly with the armies of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, to track down armed terrorist groups in Gourma and challenge their refuge, transit and storage areas. That major operation mobilized more than 1,400 men and considerable ground and air resources in the area of Gourma, as well as in part of the Gao and Timbuktu regions and even a little in central Mali.

Looking forward, a campaign plan covering a longer period between one to two years is being considered and will be the subject of planning in the coming weeks. The objective is to harmonize the future operations of the Joint Force with the various efforts undertaken by the national armed forces and the partners of the Force, Operation Barkhane and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

With regard to the partnership with MINUSMA, the additional support secured by resolution 2480 (2019), which was unable to be previously established, is now being resolved with some practical implementation measures being rolled out. However, it is clear that the implementation of the amendment to the technical agreement, whose signing is pending, could encounter significant difficulties in terms of supplies on the ground due to the distance of some areas of operations from MINUSMA bases.

Despite the progress made by the Joint Force in an increasingly difficult security context, significant constraints remain and merit the attention of the Council.

In terms of the Force's equipment, the strong international commitment to the Force since its establishment clearly made it possible at the time to announce significant international assistance to support national efforts. Indeed, €414 million of the €423 million expected were announced at the donor conference held in Brussels in February 2018. However, the implementation of the equipment to be financed by those various pledges is taking time to materialize on the ground. That can be seen from what I am about to say.

For example, of the 40 or so requests submitted to our partners, only 10 have been approved by them and only 4 of the 10 have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. In general, therefore, for a majority of the battalions, the level of funding is still low with regard to material equipment. The rolling military munitions, for instance, are still in the process of being delivered. In addition, in the area of logistics, some capacities remain largely dependent on the partners present in the area of operation.

It is also necessary to mention the situation of the police component, which exists but is difficult to deploy because of a lack of equipment, especially in terms of specialized investigation units. Fortunately, the implementation of the compliance framework has enabled significant progress thanks to the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and of some technical and financial partners. That made it possible, on the one hand, to make a genuine start in the judicialization of actions particularly by some deployed provost corps and, on the other hand, to take better account of the rules of conduct and engagement of soldiers.

In operational terms, the Force does not have its own air assets, although the current counter-terrorism efforts cannot be carried out effectively without the air component, which the military calls the third pillar. We must therefore seek alternatives to make the Force fully operational in the field.

In addition, with regard to the intelligence system, which is another major weakness of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, requests have been made for the acquisition of sensors and surveillance equipment but these have not yet been met.

Despite the strong willingness to act on the ground against a common enemy and the strong international commitment, all of which raises a strong expectation of results in a context where the affected populations have even greater demands, with increasing anger among the people, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force still faces significant challenges.

However, the Force should not to be overlooked in the overall fight against terrorism and organized crime, which is rampant in the Sahel-Saharan region, as shown by the few successes achieved during the latest operations. It can even be said to be the only alternative currently available in the fight against terrorism and cross-border crime in that common space. However, as

the security situation in the area is constantly changing, there is clearly an urgent need for the coordination and pooling of capacities by the States members of the G-5 Sahel, as well as with regard to other initiatives of the entire subregion and the international community, which remain crucial for the further operationalization of the Force.

The commitment of all stakeholders is necessary in the fight against terrorism. The President of Burkina Faso and current Chair of the G-5 Sahel, His Excellency Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, and his peers from other States welcome the outcomes of the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held in Ouagadougou on 14 September and which was broadened to the G-5 Sahel and focused on the fight against terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel. The Summit adopted a counter-terrorism action plan that will be funded with \$1 billion over four years. The funding by the 15 ECOWAS member States reflects the seriousness with which the terrorist threat is viewed in the Sahel and throughout West Africa.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the appeal made by Mr. Kaboré to all States to join the Partnership for Stability and Security in the Sahel initiative, launched at the Group of Seven Summit in Biarritz last August. This initiative will establish an international partnership for stability and security in the Sahel. The international partnership should lead to a much stronger commitment by the international community, with greater mobilization in this fight against the terrorist scourge.

The war on terrorism is a global challenge, a concern that affects the entire international community. It is a matter of international peace and security, and we must all learn from it. Particularly in the case of the Sahel, the reality that is clearly seen on the ground cannot be addressed simply with more meetings and pledges without concrete and decisive results in practice.

Today, everything has already been said and written about the situation in the G-5 Sahel region. The populations are impatient. The humanitarian consequences of terrorism are tragic in our countries and for our populations, with more than 1 million internally displaced persons in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. The populations are therefore expecting action and there are increasing risks of the destabilization of our States. We must therefore act rapidly. The situation is

deteriorating quite quickly. We must not wait until we return here in six months' time to assess how much worse the situation has become. I reiterate that the G-5 Sahel must be supported in having operational capabilities on the ground.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate our countries' sincere thanks to all partners that have supported, and continue to support, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force bilaterally and multilaterally.

Just as each of our countries alone cannot overcome the terrorist threat, the G-5 Sahel cannot effectively combat the phenomenon without partner forces such as Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA. But for MINUSMA to be effective, it needs a strong mandate. That is why I would like to reiterate the appeal made by the ECOWAS Heads of State at the Ouagadougou Extraordinary Summit and the G-5 Sahel to the General Assembly for a robust and more proactive mandate for MINUSMA to enable it to provide greater security and stability to Mali and to participate actively in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. I also reiterate their appeal to the Security Council for a mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force because, for us, terrorism is a threat to international peace and security and the Joint Force needs ongoing and predictable funding.

Every day, every forum is an opportunity for us to sound the alarm. That is what we are doing now today as a warning because it will be too late after that.

The President: I would like to remind colleagues and briefers that, at the request of the African members of the Council, consultations will take place immediately following this briefing. I therefore request all briefers to keep their remarks as short as possible.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mohammed.

Ms. Mohammed: On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and to express our gratitude for the invitation to brief the Security Council on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burkina Faso, and Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. I also look

forward to hearing from the two additional briefers, Mr. Vervaeke and Ms. Assitan Diallo.

As requested, I will try and keep my remarks as brief as possible. We have heard from both briefers today about the increasing deterioration of security in the Sahelo-Saharan region. That continues to be of great concern to the African Union.

We have heard that there has been a sharp increase in terrorist attacks in Mali, both in the north and in the centre of the country, targeting mainly the Malian armed forces and their posts and camps. Dozens of people, including civilians, have been killed in those attacks.

The latest attack, on 18 November in Tabankort, in the Gao region, during a joint operation by the Malian and Nigerian armies to secure the common borders, killed 13 Malian soldiers and wounded 29 others, and also caused extensive material damage. We have also heard that the Niger continues to face terrorist attacks in its border areas, particularly on its border with Mali, and also insurgent attacks from Boko Haram in the southern part of the country, particularly in the Diffa region. We have also heard that in Burkina Faso there is clearly a fury of terrorist attacks. We are witnessing an extension of those attacks, particularly in the central and eastern parts of the north. Sometimes the attacks target civilian groups, but other times they can also target places of worship and schools. And we have also witnessed in recent weeks the great losses suffered by defence and security forces. Chad is also not spared in that context. It is also facing insecurity due to activities linked to terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram. We have seen attacks, particularly in the north, earlier this year in January and February.

Once again, the African Union condemns these heinous attacks and expresses its solidarity with the countries of the region. In particular, we express solidarity with the G-5 Sahel countries and, of course, welcome the establishment of its Joint Force. That decision, which entails a great deal of responsibility, is very much in line with the philosophy of the African Peace and Security Architecture. In that regard, during its recent meeting on 9 April, the African Union Peace and Security Council renewed the mandate of the Joint Force.

More than ever before, the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel requires adequate resources in order to be in an offensive position. This is urgent and of absolute necessity moving forward. I take this opportunity to

recall the persistent request from the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel for direct funding from the United Nations to the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel and for the Joint Force to operate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as recommended by the Secretary-General. Moreover, it should be recalled that the international community's efforts should be part of a global vision, taking into account the other challenges faced by the Sahel region, such as in the areas of governance, development and climate change. The African Union aligns itself with that vision, which we believe that will bring more hope to the people. I must also recognize the efforts of the member States of the Economic Community of West African States, which decided earlier this year at their Extraordinary Summit held on 14 September to mobilize support for the Sahel countries. The African Union supports that initiative and calls upon the international community for substantial assistance.

On the political level, the African Union also remains committed to the peace process in Mali and Libya and will continue its efforts to resolve the crisis in those countries.

In the area of development, the African Union is supporting the countries of the Lake Chad basin as part of its regional strategy for the stabilization, recovery and resilience in the areas affected by Boko Haram. The African Union continues to provide support to the G-5 Sahel by advocating for the mobilization of resources pledged at the Partners and Donors Coordination Conference that the G-5 Sahel held on 6 December 2018 in Nouakchott to finance its priority investment programme. In addition, the African Union recently held a regional conference in Niamey on the issue of climate change in the Sahel and adopted pertinent resolutions in that regard.

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to stress that the support of the countries in the region as well as that of the African Union, the United Nations and the entire international community, is an absolute priority for winning the fight against terrorism in the region. As the Secretary-General rightly stated in his report,

“[t]errorism is a global issue and the entire international community has a responsibility to contribute.” (*S/2019/868, para. 38*)

The President: I thank Ms. Mohammed for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Vervaeke.

Mr. Vervaeke (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the European Union's action in support of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and its Joint Force — part of a global approach that combines political dialogue and support in the areas of security, development aid and humanitarian assistance.

In terms of its efforts in Africa, the European Union has been most actively providing support to the countries of the G-5 Sahel region. Today's meeting takes place in the context of increasing deterioration in the security situation, characterized by increasingly targeted and sophisticated attacks. We pay tribute to the victims and to the sacrifices that the countries of the region have made. In that regard, during the ministerial meeting that the European Union and the G-5 Sahel held in July in Ouagadougou, chaired by High Representative Federica Mogherini and Minister for Foreign Affairs Alpha Barry, whose presence I welcome here today, together we decided to strengthen our approach to supporting the G-5 Sahel towards a responsible and accountable partnership.

In that spirit a mutual commitment, the European Union decided to renew its support to the Joint Force by pledging to it an additional €138 million, which covers the operationalization of the Joint Force, the implementation of its human rights compliance framework and the development of its police component. Progress is expected, in particular with regard to the work of the Joint Force and its functioning — allow me also to commend the success of the Force's most recent operation — and the strengthening of the coordination and leadership role of the permanent secretariat of the G-5 Sahel, which includes the G-5 Sahel's development of an integrated strategic framework for security and development. That joint document will focus on the stabilization of the most vulnerable priority areas and will be adopted during the next G-5 Sahel summit. It will enable the European Union to provide its support in a more efficient manner. Equally important is the need for the Joint Force and its member States to effectively implement the compliance framework on human rights and international humanitarian law.

Under this new configuration, the European Union and the support instruments that it is implementing are adapted to the security situation on the ground. That applies to our now-permanent political dialogue with the

G-5 Sahel; the advisory and coordination cell that was relocated to Nouakchott to provide permanent support to the structures of the G-5 Sahel; the coordination hub, whose functions are currently being transferred to the G-5 in accordance with the principle of ownership; and the mechanisms of our military and civilian advisory and training missions in the Niger and Mali. In that regard, actions are under way to enable our missions to better support the Malian authorities in their efforts in the centre of the country.

Beyond its efforts to strengthen the autonomy of the G-5 Sahel, the European Union also supports the mobilization of regional and international partners to promote the stabilization of the Sahel region. To that end, the European Union has decided to provide direct support to the efforts of the partnership for security and stability in the Sahel, an initiative launched by France and Germany within the framework of the Group of Seven. That is also why the European Union supports the commitment of the Economic Community of West African States to regional security and the action plan it is set to adopt at its next summit. The European Union also reiterates its commitment to working closely with the United Nations and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

In conclusion, in order to achieve the dual objective of empowering partners and mobilizing regional and international actors, the support and leverage of the Security Council are more essential than ever. For the European Union, increasing the capabilities of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force will continue to remain a priority issue as we support the G-5 Sahel during this crucial time. The countries of the Sahel can count on the full mobilization and solidarity of the European Union.

The President: I thank Mr. Vervaeke for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Diallo.

Ms. Diallo (*spoke in French*): My name is Assitan Diallo. I am President of the Association of African Women for Research and Development, a non-governmental organization working to promote women's rights in Mali. I address the Security Council today from a country that has suffered from bloody conflict since 2012, but has been ravaged by violence and instability for almost a decade. As I have learned from my own work, it is women and young people who pay the highest price when it comes to war.

My statement today will focus on three key issues: first, access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence; secondly, the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peace and security; and, thirdly, ensuring that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) are able to respond to the security needs of our communities.

As has been well documented, gang rape and early and forced marriage, as well as the abduction of women and girls to serve as sexual slaves, are part of the broad panorama of gender-based violence in Mali. Despite the overwhelming evidence available, none of the key players in this regard — neither the authorities, nor the armed groups that signed the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in Bamako in 2015, nor the international community — have done enough to ensure justice for those women and young people, who face such abuses on a daily basis. The insecurity that prevails in areas such as northern and central Mali is currently preventing judicial authorities from returning there, where some have been abducted, tortured or killed. In addition, armed groups seek to undermine basic human rights obligations by exploiting religious laws at the local level, thereby undermining State secularism and jeopardizing the provision of real justice to survivors of gender-based violence.

There can be no peace or development in Mali without gender equality. Despite the legal requirement to ensure a 30 per cent representation of women in all processes and institutions supporting the implementation of the Bamako Agreement, this quota is far from being respected. Similarly, the processes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform must be gender-sensitive and include an equal representation of women to guarantee that their needs and experiences are truly taken into account. The current underrepresentation of women in the G-5 Sahel's defence and security structures prevents Malian women from fully contributing to peace and security in the region. Finally, the inclusion and active engagement of women — especially young women — is particularly important in countering the risk of marginalized and disenfranchised youth turning to violence.

There is widespread frustration due to MINUSMA's inability to effectively protect civilians, as well as a general sense of insecurity, despite the presence of

United Nations and regional forces. Youth attacks on the MINUSMA camps in Gao and the categorical refusal of a Bamako district to allow the G-5 Sahel Joint Force to establish a headquarters there — out of fear that they would become targets of violence — demonstrate the lack of trust that the local populations have in international forces. It is clear that MINUSMA's presence does not make people feel secure. In addition, MINUSMA, like the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, is mandated to mainstream gender across all aspects of its work. MINUSMA still needs to do more to address the gender dimensions of security, while the G-5 Sahel Joint Force must ensure that its gender unit is capable of robustly defending women's rights across the Sahel region.

Marginalization, inequality and poverty are the root causes of the current conflict and compound the pervasive insecurity gripping Mali. In order to address these challenges, MINUSMA needs to provide stronger support to the Government in order to enable it to deliver basic public services to communities in need and to ensure long-term security. That requires ongoing political dialogue with armed groups and the active participation of civil society, as well as the support of the United Nations and other international actors. While the neutrality of MINUSMA, which is at the heart of its mandate, is crucial, most Malians also want to see MINUSMA assume its role of protecting civilians and guaranteeing their security in an effective manner.

Finally, as has been noted in the reports of the Secretary-General and highlighted by other speakers before the Council, the militarization of the Sahel is not helping to establish peace in the region — and it certainly cannot occur to the detriment of the security of local populations, who are all too often trapped in the middle of such operations. That only fuels cycles of violence and mistrust, while making dialogue more difficult.

I shall share all of my recommendations with the Council in writing, but I would like to highlight just one of them here today. I call on the Security Council to hold the leadership of MINUSMA and the G-5 Sahel Joint Force accountable for the protection of civilians and gender mainstreaming across all their operations.

The solution to the complex dynamics of the conflict in Mali will not be found on the battlefield, but must emerge from dialogue and genuine regard for the concerns of ordinary people. I urge Security Council members to use their power to make that happen.

The President: I thank Ms. Diallo for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements. I remind all members that we have to juggle briefings, consultations and austerity.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): The situation in the Sahel remains very precarious, with the armies of the region are on the front line. The fighting that took place on Monday at the border between Mali and the Niger in an operation involving the armies of both countries attests to the persistent capacities of terrorist groups to inflict damage. The primary victims of terrorism are the people of the Sahel themselves. Since the beginning of the year, 1,500 people have reportedly fallen victim to terrorism in Mali and Burkina Faso.

The Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) Joint Force is the best tool available to deal with the spread of the terrorist threat. France welcomes the gains made in its operationalization. The Joint Force has conducted 11 operations since the beginning of the year. The most recent, Operation Bourgou IV, culminated last week and mobilized 1,400 men from the armies of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, with the support of forces from the French-led Operation Barkhane. The results are clear: 25 terrorists were neutralized or captured; several vehicles were recovered or destroyed, including 64 motorcycles; a workshop for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices was dismantled; and weapons, ammunition and more than a 100 telephones were seized. Progress has also been made within the human rights compliance framework, which is essential to ensuring that the Joint Force is more effective and does a better job of protecting civilians, especially society's most vulnerable members, such as women and children.

If the Joint Force is to succeed, it needs a sustained commitment based first and foremost on the engagement of the G-5 countries themselves, but also, crucially, that of international partners. At the donor conference held in Brussels in February 2018, €414 million was pledged to the Joint Force, with the European Union, its member States and the United States being the main donors. We estimate that half of that support has been disbursed so far. The Joint Force battalions have received a number of vehicles as well as equipment for countering improvised explosive devices. France encourages donors that have yet to honour their commitments to do so as soon as possible. I also welcome the fact that the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has implemented logistical support for all of the Joint Force contingents. Resolution 2480 (2019) broadens that support to cover contingents deployed outside the borders of Mali, and we can see how valuable that is to the Joint Force. France supports the G-5 countries' requests for increased multilateral support.

However, those essential efforts are not enough, as terrorism is now spreading throughout the subregion. France and Germany's initiative of a Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel is intended to strengthen the Joint Force, while broadening its scope to include the countries of the region and other sectors such as internal security and justice systems. At the Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on 14 September, ECOWAS committed to combating terrorism more effectively. In Mali, starting in 2020, a European special forces unit named Takuba will also be deployed as part of Operation Barkhane to support the Malian armed forces on their path to autonomy and resilience.

It will be impossible to achieve sustainable security for the Sahel without development, and France calls for redoubling efforts to that end. We are doing our part in that regard by allocating €522 million in funding to the G-5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme for 2019 and 2020. We must do everything we can to meet the growing humanitarian needs in the region, particularly in Burkina Faso, and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access for those who need assistance. The crisis in the Sahel is not just about development. The urgent humanitarian situation must compel all of us to do more.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the presence at today's meeting of Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burkina Faso, and we thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, and the other briefers for their reports.

We concur with today's alarming assessments of the situation in the Sahel. The security threats in that part of Africa have reached an unprecedented level. The geographic area for terrorist activity, drug trafficking and organized crime is expanding, and extremist ideology continues to win over new recruits. Sadly, there are tragic reports almost every week of the deaths of dozens of servicemen or civilians in

one country or another in the region at the hands of underground groups. As the report of the Secretary-General notes (S/2019/868), the threat is now looming over the States along the Gulf of Guinea as well. The roots of these problems are well known. In the Sahel, we are reaping the fruit of the collapse of statehood in Libya that resulted from a violent foreign intervention. We believe that if the situation in that country is not normalized — and many of our interlocutors talked to us about this during the recent Council mission to Mali and Burkina Faso — it will be virtually impossible to stabilize the region sustainably.

We support the efforts of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5) to combat terrorism and organized crime. It appears that they have already become an important part of achieving regional stability in a relatively short period of time. We are pleased with the information on the four Joint Force operations carried out in all its areas of responsibility during the reporting period. We are receiving reports on the success of the Sahel units' latest counter-terrorism operation, which ended on 17 November. We welcome the agreement on the legal status of the presence of the Joint Forces on the territory of member States of the Group of Five and the protocol on cooperation in the area of intelligence. Needless to say, there is still a great deal to be done. It is particularly worrying that the issue of selecting a permanent location for the Joint Force's headquarters has not yet been resolved. It will be vital to ramp up the provision of technical and other equipment for its units and the level of training of its military personnel as quickly as possible.

Of course, the full operationalization of the Joint Force depends on ensuring that it receives stable and predictable funding. We have seen that the funds pledged by foreign donors are gradually reaching the region. However, far from all of the commitments in that regard have been fulfilled. We support the help that the Joint Force is getting from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We believe firmly in the importance of further coordinated steps on the part both of Africans and the international community to combat terrorism in the Sahel-Saharan region. It is clear that military measures alone cannot eradicate this evil. It is essential to work to effectively counter the expansion of extremist ideology,

solve acute socioeconomic problems, strengthen State institutions and foster a culture of respect for human rights. In that regard, we support the decision adopted in Niamey at the Extraordinary Summit of the Economic Community of West African States to allocate \$1 billion towards those goals.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Russia is closely following the development of the situation in the region. We are already providing a number of countries with relevant military and technical assistance and training for military and police personnel. In general, we hope that the armed forces of the States of the Group of Five for the Sahel will become an effective tool for restoring and maintaining peace in West Africa in the near future.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the presentations provided by the briefers and especially for the participation of Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burkina Faso.

Peru has been following with concern the fragile humanitarian situation and continuing deterioration of security in the region, the result of brutal terrorist attacks and intracommunal violence that in many cases are driven by organized crime and whose destabilizing consequences risk spreading to States in West Africa. We would like to offer our condolences in that regard to the Governments and peoples of Mali and Burkina Faso for the deaths and other victims that have resulted from the reprehensible actions of such groups. In that context, we continue to consider the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5) as a crucial actor in confronting those global scourges. It will be vital to provide it with adequate equipment, training and predictable funding, and, at the same time to strengthen the operational capabilities of its various components, including its investigative units. In particular, we highlight its efforts to ensure that its activities are conducted in full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

We especially welcome the firm decision taken in September by the Heads of State of the Economic Community of West African States in September to establish a united front prioritizing the fight against terrorism, based on developing a comprehensive plan of action and ensuring significant funding for its implementation. As has been said, while a military response is necessary to combat insecurity in the region, it must be complemented by measures to promote

development and address its underlying problems, such as poverty, the weak presence of the State, the marginalization of some populations and the effects of climate change.

We therefore stress the importance of international support for the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, as an appropriate comprehensive framework for promoting the needs and priorities of the countries of the region. We also welcome the Franco-German partnership for security and stability in the Sahel.

All of these efforts must be complemented by measures to empower women and programmes aimed at generating greater employment opportunities, particularly for young people in the region, in order to prevent them from being co-opted by criminal and extremist groups as the only alternative for survival.

From a regional and subregional perspective, we believe it important that the efforts, initiatives and cooperation mechanisms deployed on the ground, including responses to the humanitarian situation, maintain political and operational coherence in order to address security and development priorities and to comply with the provisions of relevant Council resolutions.

I conclude by expressing Peru's commitment to the efforts of the G-5 Sahel countries, in coordination with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the African Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, among other United Nations bodies and agencies, as well as other actors committed to the shared objective of achieving sustainable peace in the Sahel.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): This briefing gives me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the African members of the Council — Equatorial Guinea, South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire — to express our views on the topic of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and issues related to peace and security in the Sahel region and West Africa.

Before I do so, I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, whose country holds the presidency of the G-5 Sahel, and to thank him for his illuminating briefing.

On behalf of the three African members of the Council, I would also like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa; Mr. Koen

Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service; Ambassador Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Ms. Assitan Diallo, President of the Association of African Women for Research and Development, for their detailed briefings,

The three African Council members are seriously concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel. Indeed, the persistent destabilizing acts perpetrated by terrorist groups in Mali and Burkina Faso are compounded by the exacerbation of intercommunal violence and the undeniable threats it poses to coastal West African States. Sad and tragic illustrations of that can be seen in the attacks perpetrated on 30 September and 1 October in central Mali, as well as those carried out against the Burkinabe army in the Koutougou incident on 19 August, which resulted in several dozen dead or disappeared. The three African members of the Council condemn those heinous attacks in the strongest terms and pay tribute to all who have died and express their sympathy and unflagging support for the Governments and brotherly peoples of Mali and Burkina Faso.

Faced with ever-changing security threats, these two countries devote about 25 per cent of their budget on military expenditures, despite the difficult economic situation. Mali and Burkina Faso now serve as the ultimate dam which, in the event of a breach, would allow the terrorist and jihadist outpouring, better armed and endowed with resources derived from drug and human trafficking, to engulf the entire West African subregion. That is evidenced by the kidnapping, in May, of two tourists on the border between Mali and Benin.

Despite this bleak picture, the African countries elected to the Council remain optimistic, noting the encouraging progress made in the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, with the support of the G-5 trust fund. Efforts to further support the Force are further testimony to the resolve of member States to address the challenges they face. The situation in the Sahel fully justifies the presence of the Joint Force in the fight against terrorism, transnational organized crime and trafficking in human beings, as well as in its contribution to the establishment of a regional environment conducive to peace and development.

In that regard, it is imperative that the support of the international community and the Security Council be harmonized with the efforts and determination of

member States, which has been amply demonstrated. We stress the importance of international support in reducing the current financial deficits that are limiting the capacities of the G-5 Sahel member States. Those deficits hinder the full operationalization of the Joint Force and hamper their ability to assume their sovereign responsibilities to ensure basic social services. That is why, while we fully appreciate the financial support provided to date by international partners, the three African Council members urge them to adapt their financial contributions to the scale of the current challenges.

The three African Council member States are also concerned about the spread of this instability to other West African countries. We therefore welcome the decision taken by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States at their recent extraordinary summit, held in Ouagadougou on 14 September, to mobilize \$1 billion to fight terrorism in the subregion.

The three African members of the Council fully support the unique partnership between the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, aimed at restoring peace and stability in Mali and the wider Sahel region. As recognized by the Council, this partnership offers a model for constructive cooperation between a United Nations peacekeeping operation and an African peace operation.

Despite the ongoing assistance MINUSMA provides the Joint Force, we reiterate our call for predictable and sustained funding to allow the Joint Force to effectively carry out its mandate. The United Nations must pay close attention to that requirement at a time when terrorist groups have substantial financial and material resources.

While we deplore the continuing violence in a region that is so dear to us, we also commend local authorities on their readiness to further promote frameworks for dialogue within affected communities in order to create the conditions for a peaceful resolution of their disputes and to bolster mutual trust, unity and social cohesion.

The increase in the number of internally displaced persons, the worrisome deterioration of the humanitarian situation and obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance are all major sources of concern that must be addressed. We note with satisfaction the efforts made by the G-5 Sahel to implement the human rights and

international humanitarian law compliance framework, as international support for the Joint Force remains dependent on respect for international humanitarian law and human rights. That is why we believe that the measures taken to adequately train troops will improve civilian security and mitigate the risk of human rights violations.

In conclusion, the African members of the Council reiterate their urgent appeal to all development partners to follow in the footsteps of the African Development Bank and to support its Desert to Power initiative, endorsed by the G-5 Sahel.

Mr. Syihab (Indonesia): Let me begin by welcoming His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso. I thank him and all the briefers for their comprehensive and informative presentations.

We remain deeply concerned about the security situation in the Sahel. According to the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/868), attacks by terrorist groups and intercommunal violence continue to increase. The humanitarian situation across the Sahel also continues to deteriorate. That requires closer collaboration in combating the threat and addressing the underlying causes of instability. In that regard, allow me to reiterate three points.

First, Indonesia supports the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries in addressing the security and development challenges confronting them. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is one such initiative. We welcome the progress made in the operationalization of the Joint Force, including the conduct of recent operations. The operationalization of its police and civilian components and the implementation of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework are commendable. That will serve to improve accountability and coherence with national justice systems, so that the Joint Force may enjoy greater levels of trust and support from the population. We note with concern that the Joint Force continues to face training, capability and equipment shortfalls. The multiple relocations of the headquarters of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force are also an impediment that we hope to see resolved in due course, by identifying and establishing a permanent location.

Secondly, we welcome the support of regional and international partners of the Joint Force, including the pledge made by the Heads of States of the Economic Community of West African States to mobilize

\$1 billion for counter-terrorism efforts. We note that some of the pledges are yet to be disbursed and realized. We concur with the Secretary-General that it is urgent that partners ensure the realization of their pledges. We are pleased to note that arrangements are being made with regard to the extension of the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to all contingents of the Joint Force. It is important to ensure that such assistance is delivered in a safe and timely manner. We hope that that support, along with that of others, will enhance the capability of the Joint Force.

Thirdly, as terrorist groups continue to increase their area of influence, greater coordination is needed among national and international forces operating in the Sahel. We welcome the joint operations conducted by the Joint Force, as well as the intelligence exchange protocol to enhance operations. We also believe that information-sharing should be enhanced, including with regard to the activities undertaken by the Joint Force.

Before I conclude, let me reiterate that all security initiatives should be complemented by broader efforts, including in the areas of socioeconomic development and capacity-building. Enhancing States' capacity and ability to deliver basic services, alleviate poverty, create opportunities for young people and combat climate change should be prioritized. We support the joint efforts being made by regional and international actors in the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Indonesia stands ready to contribute and work together with a view to achieving lasting peace and stability in the Sahel.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): First of all, let me extend a particularly warm welcome to His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso and thank him for his briefing, and thank all of the other briefers for their insightful presentations and information.

Germany attaches great importance to peace and stability in the Sahel. Unfortunately, as we have been repeatedly reminded today, the security situation continues to deteriorate, and that worrisome trend is also reflected in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2019/868), along with indications that the violence may spread to the coastal States of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. Unfortunately, the humanitarian situation is worsening as well. That is why the international community urgently needs to do more to help stabilize the Sahel.

Several briefers have referred to the initiative known as the partnership for security and stability in the Sahel — an initiative launched by France and Germany during the previous Group of Seven Summit in Biarritz and presented to the General Assembly here in New York in September. The partnership seeks to enhance the support already provided to the Sahel by focusing on all relevant security actors. It seeks to improve coordination among the many donors and to support the reform efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) countries in their security sectors. Broad international participation, including that of members of the Council, would be greatly appreciated.

Owing to the pressing challenges outlined once again in today's briefings, we see the need for more rapid progress with regard to the operationalization of the Joint Force and the political integration of the G-5 Sahel as a regional organization. Germany is ready to consider ways to assist and attain those goals and to increase United Nations support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

I would like to focus on four points that are a little more specific in that regard.

First of all, Germany is a strong partner of the G-5 Sahel and has contributed about €28 million in support of the Joint Force so far. The Joint Force now needs to quickly increase its operational capabilities. One such example is that the G-5 Sahel headquarters in Bamako, which has been fully equipped and financed by the European Union, needs to be used as soon as possible. Making the G-5 Sahel Joint Force even more operational obviously requires a joint effort. In that regard, we would like to see stronger engagement from all G-5 Sahel countries, and we call on all international partners that have pledged their support to increase the predictability of their funding for the Joint Force.

Secondly, Germany is certain that the Joint Force has the potential to contribute to increasing security in the Sahel. But we must realize and take note of the fact that we are not quite there yet, and we need to see considerably greater operational capabilities, ownership and commitment from the G-5 Sahel countries themselves in order to make the Force a success. Unfortunately, the security situation in the Sahel has markedly deteriorated in recent months, as we have been reminded today by the briefers. The Joint Force itself has repeatedly come under attack, very prominently in October and again in November.

That is why we are convinced that there is a continuing need for an international security presence in the Sahel region for the time being. That includes the presence of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, which should be equipped with the resources necessary to be able to implement its current mandate in central Mali.

Thirdly, several briefers referred to the human rights component of fighting terrorism. Germany strongly believes that safeguarding human rights and building inclusive societies are in fact prerequisites to successfully countering terrorism and extremism. Therefore, there cannot be any compromises when it comes to respect for human rights. We fully support the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework of the Joint Force and thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for its dedicated work on that issue.

Fourthly and finally, Germany is equally convinced that an isolated military approach to fighting terrorism and insecurity will not be successful. Human security needs to be increased through civilian police capabilities that remain engaged in order to ensure a locally accepted State presence after the acute threat of terrorism has subsided. We therefore support security-related stabilization measures to strengthen domestic security, such as police cooperation and training in the context of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. That stabilization approach also includes measures to build trust between security forces and the population. In the long run, the fight against extremism and terrorism and their root causes requires an integrated approach consisting of security measures, immediate stabilization efforts and long-term development programmes in order to build capabilities and resilience.

In conclusion, we need to strengthen the United Nations country teams and make use of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and its good offices. We would also like to encourage the Peacebuilding Commission, given its track record of working with the Sahel and West Africa, to provide concrete input on questions of peacebuilding in the region.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank all of today's briefers and extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Burkina Faso, His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry.

I wish to begin my statement by conveying our deepest sympathy to the families of those who were killed and to the authorities of Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger following the recent terrorist attacks that claimed the lives of dozens of members of those countries' security forces, including the attack on Monday, with reports suggesting the lamentable loss of 24 soldiers of the Malian armed forces, as well as the continuing loss of innocent civilian lives as a result of the intercommunal violence and terrorism that are plaguing the Sahel subregion. We fully condemn those attacks and acts of irrational violence.

We remain extremely concerned about the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel, fuelled by the spread of terrorism and the increase in intercommunal violence, with the mounting latent risk that the situation may spread to other countries in the region, threatening the stability of the whole of West Africa. It is therefore essential to redouble our efforts and act firmly to contain and respond to the threat, adopting a comprehensive approach that takes the political dimension, security and development into account. We recognize that this task is not an easy one owing to the complexity of the security situation prevailing in the Sahel, particularly in Mali, where terrorist groups are taking advantage of the vacuum created by States' limited capacity to ensure security, justice, governance and economic opportunities for their mostly young population.

In the light of the situation, we stress the importance of continuing to decisively support Sahel countries, including the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), in their domestic struggle to achieve the peace, security and political and economic stability to which their citizens are entitled. In that connection, recognizing that the solution cannot be exclusively military, I wish to highlight some elements that we believe are priorities at this critical juncture.

First, we urge the Government of Mali, signatory armed groups, civil society in general, including women, youth and religious leaders, to pursue efforts towards common empowerment and to resolve their differences through a national inclusion dialogue with a view to effectively implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali without further delay. In that regard, we commend the work and role played by civil society organizations, such as that represented by Ms. Diallo.

Secondly, the offensive against the violence committed by armed groups and terrorists and the transnational organized crime prevailing in the Sahel must be strengthened, and the international community must continue to support national security forces and the Joint Force, whose operations are essential and complementary to those of other actors present in the region. In that respect, we call for continued and improved cooperation among the various security forces operating on the ground.

Finally, we call for continued progress on the operationalization of the Joint Force, including the conduct of a number of operations in the three demarcated border areas, the implementation of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework in order to improve the security of the population in the course of military operations, and the deployment of the police component, whose coordination with the justice systems in the G-5 Sahel countries will be essential to combatting impunity and bringing to justice those responsible for crimes.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The delegation of China welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Alpha Barry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, and thanks him for his briefing. We thank Assistant Secretary-General Keita, Ambassador Mohammed and Managing Director Vervaeke for their briefings. We also listened attentively to Ms. Diallo's statement.

At present, the Sahel region is grappling with multiple challenges, including a fragile security environment, the spread of terrorism and rising transnational organized crime, which need to be addressed in a holistic manner. The international community should continue to provide support to the countries of the region, and especially to the efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to independently tackle regional security challenges. We need to increase support for the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, which is facing a deteriorating regional security environment and gaps in operational capacity, equipment, training and funding. As an important mechanism for countries of the region to take the initiative in responding to security challenges, the Joint Force is making a critical contribution to peace and security in Africa and beyond. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali should continue to provide support to the Joint Force in keeping with relevant agreements. The

international community should continue to provide support and assistance.

We need to push forward the political settlement of regional hotspot issues. The security and stability of the Sahel require an earnest effort to advance the peace process in the countries concerned. The international community should, on the basis of respect for their sovereignty, actively support countries of the region in advancing peace processes and promoting national reconciliation so as to achieve the gradual de-escalation and definitive settlement of relevant hotspot issues. The Malian parties should be given continuous support to carry out an inclusive dialogue and consultation and accelerate the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Paying greater attention to the settlement of external issues, such as the crisis in Libya, can help reduce their impact on the Sahel.

We need to give full play to the role of regional mechanisms. China has consistently championed the efforts of African countries to resolve African problems in African ways and has supported African regional and subregional organizations, such as the G-5 Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, in playing a lead role in dealing with Sahel issues. The international community should help the permanent secretariat of the G-5 Sahel to build capacity and strengthen communication and coordination with countries of the region and relevant regional and subregional organizations so that national and regional strategies and the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel can work together as an organic whole to create synergy, with each part fully leveraging its respective advantages.

We need to address both the symptoms and the root causes of the conflicts. The Sahel region is plagued by poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation and other problems. The international community should help countries of the region meet development challenges, assist the Secretary-General in implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan, and support the Priority Investment Programme developed by Sahel countries in line with the actual needs of the countries of the region and their peoples. It should help the region achieve sustainable development and deliver a peace dividend in order to attain sustainable peace.

China has always supported the efforts of African countries, including those of the Sahel, in the pursuit of peace and development. We support the actions of the G-5 Sahel to assume ownership of security responsibilities and meet regional security challenges. China supports the United Nations in providing the Joint Force with necessary financial support. Together with the rest of the international community, China stands ready to continue to contribute to the stability and prosperity of the Sahel and the African continent as a whole.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Let me first thank our briefers for their informative presentations. We especially appreciate the personal participation in the meeting of His Excellency Minister Alpha Barry.

Our briefers today have confirmed the alarming tone of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/868), which points to a rapid increase in the number of terrorist attacks and the number of victims, especially in Mali and Burkina Faso. We strongly condemn those attacks. Terrorist groups have strengthened their position across the Sahel region, making many parts of it unstable. As we are well aware, the lack of stability, poverty, impunity and limited State presence are the main causes of the growing scale of terrorism. It is crucial to focus on those challenges in parallel with an effective security strategy.

We believe that the new international initiatives focused on the Sahel region that have been undertaken in recent months, such as the partnership for security and stability in the Sahel, announced by France and Germany in August, and the Economic Community of West African States Summit on Terrorism, held in Burkina Faso in September, will further strengthen international support to the region, with the United Nations playing a leading role.

Poland appreciates the cooperation with partners such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Thanks to the involvement of those important actors, the justice system has been strengthened, contributing to the advancement of the implementation of the human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law compliance framework.

The report of the Secretary-General has proven that comprehensive cooperation and joining forces offer an effective way to address the root causes of conflict,

violent extremism and terrorism. We are glad to see a positive example of such collaboration in Mauritania, which hosts the permanent secretariat of the G-5 Sahel and the G-5 Sahel Defence College. The efforts made to increase the capacity of Mauritanian soldiers operating under joint forces are admirable. We also welcome the information on progress in training specialized police units to fight terrorism and international organized crime, including 22 newly deployed officers in Burkina Faso and 15 in the Niger.

We are deeply concerned by the information coming from the Mopti region about members of the Malian armed forces, operating under the Joint Force, who may have committed serious human rights violations. It is very important that a timely investigation into the allegations against Joint Force units be conducted, as that will strengthen transparency regarding the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework.

Let me conclude by confirming our strong support for the mandate of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. We hope that all necessary steps will be taken to further operationalize its police component, which will be a critical part of the Force. Let me also express our deep gratitude to the personnel of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force for their brave service under very challenging circumstances.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank the various briefers. I would especially like to welcome the presence of Minister Barry, whose country holds the presidency of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel).

In a context of extreme fragility, the initiative of the G-5 countries to join forces for peace and development in the Sahel deserves our support. Belgium shares and supports the objective of strengthening cross-border security cooperation through the creation of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, and more broadly that of strengthening the security sector of the five member States. For several years, my country has been involved in such efforts. For instance, Belgium supports the Nigerian army and provides technical advisers to the European Union (EU) Training Mission in Mali and the EU capacity-building mission Sahel Mali. In that same spirit, Belgium supports the objectives of the partnership for security and stability in the Sahel.

Belgium welcomes two recent positive developments: the relaunch of operations of the Joint Force and the support for the Joint Force from the United

Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We strongly encourage the G-5 Sahel to maintain its operations over the long term and gradually to increase its ambition as the national defence and security forces grow stronger. With regard to MINUSMA's logistical support, I recall that Belgium committed €1 million in 2018 to meet that objective.

Certainly, some equipment promised to the Force has not yet been delivered, which has had an impact on operational planning. However, there is no shortage of work in progress, and some progress is possible without additional resources. The functioning of the permanent secretariat, the development of the police component, the establishment of the headquarters, the drafting of an updated concept of operations and the establishment of an international coordination mechanism are examples of areas where the G-5 Sahel can broadly pursue its operationalization from this point forward. Moreover, I call on all G-5 States to cooperate fully with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the full and speedy implementation of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework.

Let me conclude on a very important point. Belgium deplores the worrisome developments in the security and humanitarian situation in part of the Sahel. Unfortunately, there have been countless attacks on uniformed personnel, as well as civilian massacres. However, as in any crisis, the solution is above all political, and there are many measures that can be taken. We must of course provide a firm security response by dismantling terrorist networks, draining their sources of funding and thwarting their deadly narrative. But it is also necessary to meet people's aspirations in terms of development, the delivery of basic services, anti-corruption and justice, to ensure respect for human rights, combat all forms of the stigmatization of certain ethnic groups or communities and also fight impunity. It is therefore truly a global effort of governance and prevention that must be carried out in those territories so that the people can lead a normal, peaceful and dignified life.

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin, Mr. President, by welcoming His Excellency Mr. Barry's among us. We thank him for his briefing and the other briefers for their statements. We were pleased to hear a variety of speakers shedding light on the overall situation in the Sahel, specifically the challenges facing that region, including the

humanitarian situation, in which 12 million people are in need of humanitarian and security relief owing to the activities of terrorists, which target not only civilians but military personnel in Mali and Burkina Faso.

I would like to address three points today: the efforts of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), regional cooperation and the steps to be taken.

In our view, there is no doubt that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force plays a critical role in countering security challenges in the Sahel region. We commend the efforts of all members of the Force to operationalize it. The Force has undertaken five operations since May, notwithstanding the administrative and financial challenges that it has encountered. We stand ready to consider the methods and tools at the disposal of the Security Council to buttress the efforts of the Force and ensure its administrative and financial stability over the long term.

We also welcome the measures adopted by the new Force Commander, General Oumarou Namata, specifically through the plan of action for the upcoming period. We are also eagerly awaiting the 2020 action plan, and wish him and the Force success in its current operations, all the more so given that the security situation continues to unravel throughout the region, in Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso, and to extend into the coastal States.

In that regard, I cannot fail to commend the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in delivering the necessary support for the Joint Force. We further welcome the efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to enhance compliance with principles of human rights in the region. We also stress the importance of honouring the pledges to the Joint Force to ensure that it can fully shoulder its responsibility with the necessary resources, without being stymied by financial shortfalls.

I would like to address the need to step up international and regional cooperation to counter shared challenges facing the States of the Sahel region, of which there are multitude. Information-sharing mechanisms and best practices must be enhanced, especially given that terrorist groups have cross-border networks through which they accrue revenue by trafficking in illicit goods in order to bankroll their activities.

Regional initiatives are important and positive, such as the Economic Community of West African States Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism, held in September. That is an important step forward to coordinate regional efforts. We believe that such cooperation will enhance the efforts of the Joint Force and other regional initiatives, such as the Accra initiative and the Joint Force initiative.

We encourage the Joint Force to strengthen information-sharing mechanisms with United Nations bodies, specifically MINUSMA, which has provided support to the Force. We believe that ongoing cooperation between the Joint Force and MINUSMA will facilitate such support, especially given that MINUSMA is conducting a risk assessment and ensuring compliance with human rights principles prior to providing the requested assistance. To that end, a mechanism could be adopted to improve coordination between the United Nations and the Joint Force.

To conclude, many issues need to be dealt with in order to achieve stability in the region, including in the military and development areas. Progress must also be made in the political process in Mali, and the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation must be implemented. We believe that such implementation is necessary for the region as a whole. We must closely monitor the situation during the upcoming period and look into all means at the disposal of the Council to ensure regional stability.

In terms of addressing the root causes of instability, there is a need to achieve development throughout the region, focus on strengthening governance, counter poverty, open up economic opportunities for the people and put an end to threats related to climate change. We need to see progress on that track as well as at the military level over the coming period.

Mr. Barkin (United States of America): I thank the briefers for their remarks today. The situation in the Sahel demands that the international community focus its efforts in an intelligent, deliberate and collaborative way. Today's briefing is a step in that direction.

We are concerned that the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is struggling to become fully operational, and we call on all donors to deliver on their bilateral pledges to the Joint Force.

The United States is doing its part to strengthen the Sahel. In fiscal year 2018, the State Department provided \$111 million in direct security assistance to

the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and another \$200 million to the national forces of the G-5 members. The United States Agency for International Development provided a total of \$249 million in bilateral and regional development funding as well as nearly \$235 million in humanitarian assistance.

But local and regional Governments of the Sahel must also do their part to support efforts by the international community. The Governments of the G-5 member States should be leading this process. Regrettably, that has not been the case in Mali, which is the epicentre of instability in the region. We are disappointed at the nearly total lack of progress by the Government of Mali and the signatory armed groups in implementing the substantive provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process. More must be done. We call for the signatories and the Governments in the region to breathe new life into the Algiers Agreement and to put the needs of the people first.

Respect for human rights and international humanitarian law are also critical components in building the foundations for a stable Sahel. To this end, the Joint Force must continue to strictly adhere to the compliance framework to prevent, investigate, address and report allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Government forces, too, must abide by international humanitarian law. We call on the Governments of Mali and Burkina Faso to fully investigate reports that their security forces committed human rights violations, including allegations of extrajudicial killings, and to hold those responsible accountable. United States Government assistance efforts may be significantly restricted by legislation if these critical human rights concerns are not addressed.

Turning to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), we thank President Kaboré for having convened the members of ECOWAS last September to discuss terrorism. The summit united the region and international partners, and ECOWAS's \$1 billion pledge to fight terrorism and address violent extremism is an important step towards applying regional solutions to the Sahel's security challenges.

We also welcome the joint French and German initiative — the partnership for security and stability in the Sahel — and the ongoing efforts by the European

Union to fill the gaps in its bilateral assistance. We look forward to partnering together as the initiative develops.

Finally, we continue to hear calls to provide additional United Nations direct assistance to the Joint Force. We need to move past these requests and focus on calling on the Joint Force to fully leverage already existing mechanisms and to ask partners to honour the pledges that they have made to the Joint Force, as well as to support to the individual G-5-member militaries that supply forces to the Joint Force.

The G-5 Sahel States must make progress towards effective governance, respect for human rights, accountability and inclusiveness, including the meaningful participation of women, young people and marginalized groups. Our collective efforts to stabilize the region depend on this progress, and our combined endeavours can achieve durable peace and stability and unleash the potential of this vital region and its people.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

We share the concerns set out today by our briefers — I am grateful to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso for his briefing — and set out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/868) about the continued deterioration of the security situation across the Sahel and the fact that violence appears to be spreading southwards to coastal West African States.

We commend and support the continued efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5) and the broader region to combat instability. In particular, we welcome the G-5 Joint Force's recent operations in the Gourma region and the important commitment made by the G-5 and wider West African States at September's summit of the Economic Community of West African States to fight this growing insecurity.

The United Kingdom is scaling up its own efforts in the region to address instability, including through our deployment to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (MINUSMA) next year, but it is vital that countries in the region play the leading role. In this regard, I underline three points.

First, there is a need for continued close cooperation with other actors in the region. It is only through strong partnership with MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane that the Force will be able to deliver effect.

Secondly, the G-5 should respond to current dynamics by focusing efforts on the tri-border region of Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso.

Thirdly, I stress the importance of full compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law.

The United Kingdom reiterates the Secretary-General's calls on the Burkina Faso authorities to investigate allegations of violations committed by Joint Force personnel and urges the Malian authorities to conclude their investigations into allegations within their contingent. The steps already taken to operationalize the human rights compliance framework are welcome, and full implementation and adherence to the framework is vital to ensure the integrity and longevity of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force.

The United Kingdom calls on all stakeholders to meet the commitments made to the G-5 Sahel. The United Kingdom notes that it contributed more than \$20 million through European Union and bilateral funds to the G-5 Sahel Force in this financial year, and that is against the backdrop of a United Kingdom contribution of \$116 million in bilateral development funding, in addition to what is provided through multilateral organizations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.