



Security Council Briefing on Peace and Security in Africa G5 Sahel, 16 May 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Ms Francesca Gatt, Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you, President, and I also thank Assistant General Pobeé, Mr. Eric Tiaré and Ms. Aïssatou Diouf for their informative briefings this morning.

Malta believes that a stable, consistent, and viable regional response, backed by international support, is urgently required as part of the solution to terrorism and violent extremism which has gripped the region.

Malta expresses deep concern over this incessant wave of violence that has increased tenfold over the past years, and the humanitarian situation in the region. We must never lose sight of the grave impact the violence is having on civilians.

In particular, we refer to the devastating toll on children, with a staggering increase in their killing and maiming, the systematic burning and looting of schools, food insecurity due to blockades on villages and the sabotaging of water networks. Furthermore, the confirmed killings of hundreds in Moura by the Malian Armed Forces and foreign military personnel is deeply saddening and disturbing. It is important to acknowledge the victims. Justice is needed to combat impunity.



The key to unlocking progress for peace and development among the countries of the region is a solution which bears strong consideration to the multiplicity of the existing challenges which can only be faced through enhanced regional leadership and cooperation, the sharing of expertise, and solidarity between the Sahelian and coastal countries. Ensuring the protection and well-being of civilians must always be the priority.

On this note, and despite the significant challenges faced over the past year, Malta remains fully supportive of the continued efforts to operationalise the G5 Sahel Joint Force. We thank MINUSMA for its continued and invaluable support to the Joint Force.

In parallel, we look forward to the outcome of the work of the High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel in proposing innovative ways to address these security challenges, aggravated by the spiralling humanitarian and economic problems in the region.

We must also underline the severe climate change consequences in the region which threaten access to food and water by undermining agricultural activity, severely impairing the health and wellbeing of vulnerable communities. This triggers conflict over food and water resources leading to significant difficulties in sustaining livelihoods and amplifying the effects of existing situations of vulnerability. Women and children bear the brunt of this, as we have heard today.



A holistic and effective counter-terrorism strategy for the region must also include a comprehensive understanding of the drivers of violent extremism and insecurity, as well as whole-of-society approaches to tackling these issues. Resilience should be bolstered by trust in the Government system and its institutions, coupled with respect for human rights. Malta calls upon the Governments to deliver the deserved level of governance and justice to its people through transitions to democratic rule and respect for the rule of law. ECOWAS and the African Union have a central role to play in these efforts.

Malta welcomes the cooperation between the Joint Force and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) in its support towards the organisation's respect of human rights and international humanitarian law obligations which must underpin the conduct of all military operations.

President

Malta strongly advocates for increased support to women peacebuilders as agents of change in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism, including through early warning mechanisms. We call for more gender-responsive capacity-strengthening and protection efforts to enable the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in building and sustaining peace and preventing any relapse into conflict.



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Meanwhile, we will continue to back significant efforts of regional cooperation in the Sahel which aim to strengthen security and governance, based on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

I thank you.