



~FACTSHEET~

Brussels, 16 January 2013

The European Union and the Sahel

The EU has a comprehensive approach to the crisis in the Sahel region. In March 2011, the Council welcomed the presentation of an EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. This strategy is based on the assumptions that development and security are interconnected and can be mutually supportive and that the complex crisis in the Sahel requires a regional answer. On 23 July, the Council adopted conclusions aimed at accelerating the implementation of this strategy.

The EU is concerned by the deteriorating political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation in the Sahel region since early 2000. This situation predates the Libyan crisis, but was further exacerbated by its consequences.

In this context, the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, which is currently being implemented in Mauritania, Niger and Mali, has proven a useful tool to enhance the coherence of the EU approach to the crisis. The EU has allocated over € 660 million to the region under the 10th European Development Fund (2007-2013). In the framework of its Sahel strategy; the EU has further mobilised additional financial resources for development and security related projects worth € 167 million along the four lines of action of the strategy:

- (i) Development, good governance and internal conflict resolution;
- (ii) Political and diplomatic action;
- (iii) Security and the rule of law; and
- (iv) Countering violent extremism and radicalisation.

Since fighting erupted in early 2012 in northern Mali, groups of various affiliations – most of them with well documented links to Al-Qaida – are expanding their influence and establishing safe havens for terrorist and criminal activities. Violence has forced 446,000 Malians to flee their homes and further aggravated the food crisis. More than 18 million people are at risk of hunger throughout the Sahel region. In this context, the European Commission committed € 172 million under its humanitarian aid budget and launched an international partnership for resilience in the Sahel region (Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Resilience - AGIR).

On the situation in Mali, the Foreign Affairs Council expressed the EU's determination to support Mali in restoring constitutional order and the rule of law and re-establishing a fully sovereign democratic government with authority throughout Malian territory. Previous Council conclusions indicate that:

- the EU will gradually resume its development cooperation, which has been put on hold following the coup d'état of 21 March 2012, as soon as a credible road map towards these objectives is adopted and in the light of tangible progress;
- the EU will provide financial support to the African-led international support mission to Mali (AFISMA) through the African Peace Facility;
- the EU will establish a training mission (EUTM) with the aim to train Malian forces advise them notably on command and control, logistical chain and human resources as well as on international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians and human rights. The mission will not be involved in combat operations.

The EU is committed to contributing actively to a peaceful and credible transition process in Mali and to long-lasting solutions to the security crisis in northern Mali and in the Sahel region across the board, in close coordination with other regional and international stakeholders.

Diplomatic efforts with national, regional and international stakeholders

The EU pursues diplomatic efforts with national, regional and international stakeholders who have an interest in resolving the crisis in the Sahel region. The EU is in constant dialogue at the highest level with the authorities in charge of the political transition in Mali.

The EU is in favour of an enhanced international coordination and considers that the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy Mr Romano Prodi should play an important role to this end.

The EU is a core member of the international Support and Follow Up Group on the situation in Mali co-chaired by the African Union and the UN. The EU has also strong working relations with ECOWAS and Algeria and Mauritania.

Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) civilian mission "EUCAP SAHEL Niger"

The EU launched a civilian CSDP mission EUCAP SAHEL in Niger in July 2012 with the objective to fight terrorism and organised crime. Over its initial two years mandate, the mission will aim at:

- (a) Advising and assisting in the implementation of the security dimension of the Nigerien Strategy for Security and Development at national level, with other actors,
- (b) Supporting regional and international coordination in the fight against terrorism and organised crime,
- (c) Strengthening the rule of law through the development of the criminal investigation capacities and adequate training programmes,
- (d) Enhancing the sustainability of Nigerien Security Forces (Gendarmerie, Garde Nationale and Police Nationale),
- (e) Contributing to the identification, planning and implementation of projects in the security field.

With an annual budget of € 8.7 million, the mission will rely by December 2012 on 50 international police and military experts under the authority of the Head of Mission, Colonel Francisco Espinosa Navas. A coordination mechanism between the mission and the relevant ministries is already in place under the auspices of the Prime Minister. Particular attention will be given to synergies with other EU and bilateral projects funded through the European Development Fund, the European Commission Instrument for Stability or by EU member states.

Liaison Officers have already been deployed to Bamako and Nouakchott, to foster regional cooperation between the security forces of Niger, Mali and Mauritania in their fight against terrorism and organised crime, as well as to explore the opportunity to propose future actions at the request of relevant national authorities.

Response to the food crisis and long-term food insecurity in the Sahel region

The Western Sahel region suffers from chronic food insecurity, linked to national under-production, increase of food prices on international markets or local agricultural over-production which causes rapid price fluctuations. Some specific areas are constantly suffering from food insecurity. In the countries of the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) acute malnutrition rates are persistently above the internationally recognised alert threshold of 10% Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate. An estimated 226,000 children in average die because of malnutrition or directly related causes every year, whether or not there is a crisis.

The 2012 crisis had a bigger than usual impact in a large number of countries across the Sahel region, including the northern zones of some coastal countries in West Africa.

The difficulties to secure adequate food supply and decent income in the Sahel region are due to:

- ***Climate change and ecosystem degradation*** increase the unpredictability of rainfall.
- ***Population growth*** is among the highest in the world (on average, the population of the Sahel doubles every 25 years). This increases pressure on natural resources and food supply.
- ***Chronic poverty***. The Sahel states rank at the bottom of the 2011 UN Human Development Index (Niger ranks 186, Burkina Faso 181, Chad 183, Mali 175 and Mauritania 159 out of the 187 countries listed).
- ***Regional economic disparity*** (between Sahel countries and coastal countries) ***and low resistance to external economic shocks*** (e.g. the food price crisis of 2008) contribute significantly to the fragility of the Sahel. **As a result, food insecurity in the Sahel is primarily a matter of income and not production.** For example, Senegal, which imports nearly half of its food consumption needs, is less food insecure than Niger. As another example, widespread lack of economic access to basic healthcare contributes substantially to malnutrition among children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- ***Weakness of public finances and national institutions*** in some countries hampers adequate responses to the increasing frequency of crises that affects the region. However, large-scale funding by donors, including the European Commission, has contributed to some improvements in recent years.

The on-going emergency and the recurrent nature of the crisis in the Sahel call for both an immediate response to help the people in need and a long-term strategy to reduce the chronic risks of food security and strengthen people's resilience.

Humanitarian aid

The Commission allocated a total of € 337 million of humanitarian aid to respond to the crisis in the Sahel region in 2012.

To reinforce the capacities of the countries to cope with the present situation, the EU has adopted a three-phased approach based on close coordination between international humanitarian, development aid agencies and national governments. The main phases and their timeframe for the 2012 crisis are 'mitigation and preparedness' (November 2011 – February 2012), 'emergency response' (March – September 2012) and 'recovery/resilience building' (after September 2012).

Long-term EU development response

In addition to humanitarian support, the EU is operating development programmes, funded through the EU budget and the European Development Fund. Projects for over € 200 million are currently on-going or planned in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Chad.

Due to the aggravation of the food crisis the European Commission decided to allocate an additional € 164.5 million. It will be divided between six countries in the West Africa region as follows: Mauritania (€ 13 million), Burkina Faso (€ 17 million), Mali (€ 15 million), Niger (€42.5 million), Chad (€ 35 million), Senegal (€ 5 million) and other West African regional initiatives (€ 38 million).

The EU will continue and intensify the work it has been carrying out in the region: strengthening resilience, working on the root causes of malnutrition, improving the functioning of regional markets, and increasing the regional and national capacity to reduce the risks of disasters.

More Information:

[EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel](#)

[CSDP civilian mission "EUCAP SAHEL Niger"](#)

Factsheet on the EU training mission in Mali

[Response to the food crisis and long-term food insecurity in the Sahel region of Africa](#)

