



Support for the Sahel – The Stability of North and West Africa Is in Germany’s Interest

Position Paper of the
CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the German Bundestag

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Africa is Europe's neighbouring continent. Challenges and opportunities that arise from Africa's development affect us directly. In recent years, we have seen particular risks and challenges emerge in the Sahel. This region – which for the purposes of this paper will be defined as the region comprising Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad – is crucial not only for the stability of North and West Africa, but also for Europe's long-term security. In geographical, but also cultural, economic, and political terms, it forms a bridge between the Maghreb to the north and the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea to the south. Transitions between regions are smooth, borders between countries almost impossible to control and therefore *de facto* permeable.

Lasting conflicts, radical Islamic terrorism, poor governance in some countries, high demographic growth, increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events, as well as a lack of sustainable development threaten to further destabilise the region. In the foreseeable future, managing the coronavirus crisis will confront the region with enormous new challenges and put another damper on development. Prospects for young people are deteriorating rapidly. Religious intolerance is another factor that creates a breeding ground for bloody conflicts. If these current negative trends in the Sahel continue, there is a danger that all of West Africa and its adjacent regions will destabilise – with all the consequences that this might entail for people in the region and in Europe: renewed terrorist activity in North Africa, which would lead to further destabilisation in the direct vicinity of the European Union (EU); a further expansion of areas of operation or retreat for terrorists and terrorist groups such as ISIS or al-Qaeda, as well as an increase of refugee movements and illegal migration. At present, there is a real danger that enormous areas will emerge where no law applies, which could lead to increasing activities of organised crime in Europe's immediate neighbourhood. Even now, some of the most important routes for drug trafficking and illegal migration lead via West Africa.

I. The Sahel Is the Key to North and West Africa

This negative trend affects all countries of the Sahel, albeit at different levels, and spreads into neighbouring regions as well. In Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as in the Chad Basin, the situation has recently deteriorated to a particularly high degree. The conflict with terror militia in north-eastern Nigeria also had destabilising effects on the entire region, even across borders. We already observe first signs that instability will spread to the coastal countries of West Africa (e.g., Benin, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, or even Senegal).

With targeted attacks on camps of the Malian, Burkinabe, and Nigerien armed forces, terrorist groups have demonstrated that they are willing and able to lead complex operations. The armed forces of the Sahel countries have so far not been able to successfully meet these attacks. Vast stretches of Mali and Burkina Faso are no longer under the control of the security forces; government-run administrative institutions left the region long ago; schools are closed, and the number of internally displaced persons is rising dramatically. In Burkina Faso alone, there are now more than 800,000 IDPs due to these conflicts.

For most people in the Sahel, economic prospects are limited. Today, jobs are mainly to be found in agriculture and the informal sector. A high birth rate increases challenges for food security and puts education and health care systems to the test. All three sectors had suffered from considerable deficits even before the COVID-19 pandemic, even lagging behind other countries in West and Central Africa. Young women have little access to jobs or an education that sufficiently prepares them for the labour market. Poverty and a lack of prospects and educational opportunities increase the conflict potential in the region. Governments and administrative structures in the Sahel countries are underpowered and, in the light of the enormous challenges, often unable to provide sufficient services on their own or to guarantee security and stability.

These developments directly affect us in Europe. It is therefore in Europe's vital interest that the international community support the states and societies of the Sahel in a joint effort, in order to enable them to effectively meet the challenges mentioned above. The international community must intensify its commitment in the Sahel and the adjacent countries, with an integrated approach that leads to an effective and complementary use of civilian and military instruments. It is in Germany's own security interest to make a tangible contribution in this area.

At the same time, it is clear that sustainable and peaceful development in the region crucially depends on governmental and non-governmental stakeholders on the spot. Governments need to significantly increase their efforts to find lasting settlements for political conflict, undertake comprehensive reforms and increase efficiency in government structures, make societies more inclusive, etc.

II. The G5 and International Efforts in the Sahel

In 2014, five countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauretania, Niger, and Chad – joined forces to establish the G5 Sahel Group, in order to find a common answer to cross-border challenges in matters of development and security policy. This alliance, however, has not yet unfolded its full potential and must urgently become more

efficient. To achieve this, the G5 countries need the continued support of the international community, but also a clear political will on the part of their governments and heads of state to step up reform efforts and increase their commitment.

In July 2017, during the Franco-German Ministerial Council, Germany and France took the initiative to found the “*Sahel Alliance*”. The goal of this alliance is to offer a platform to improve and expand development and stabilisation efforts, and to allow donors to coordinate more effectively along six key areas (youth employment, agriculture/rural development, climate/energy, governance, decentralisation and basic services, civilian security), as well as cross-sectional issues such as gender or the private economy. In addition, this forum is supposed to enable a better cooperation with the G5 Sahel. The Sahel Alliance unites all major donors to the Sahel region; its members are currently running and/or making definite plans for projects in the areas mentioned above that amount to 11.6 billion Euros (2018-2022). The Sahel Alliance has been an important facilitator to strengthen the development policy dialogue on the Sahel. In 2018, it initiated an emergency relief programme for water and sanitation with a volume of 266.3 million Euros. In the future, Sahel Alliance members are planning to set up more joint programmes.

With its first summit in Brussels in February 2018, the European Union, together with the United Nations and the G5, generated further international attention and secured additional financial support for security and stability in the region. At a G5 conference in December 2018, supported by the EU and the Sahel Alliance, the G5 also mobilised considerable additional funds for development and civilian investment programmes.

At the G7 summit in Biarritz in late August 2019, Germany and France took the initiative to make their support for the national armed forces of Sahel countries even more efficient and close existing capability gaps. To this end, they launched the “*Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel*” (P3S). In addition, there are plans to reinforce both the internal coordination among the various international missions (such as MINUSMA, EUTM Mali, and EUCAP Sahel Mali) and the external coordination of those missions with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the countries of the Gulf of Guinea. Terrorist groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) or the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) are already making forays into northern Côte d'Ivoire and Benin. There is a real danger that instability may spread. P3S adds a security component to the coordinated development efforts that are already happening in the framework of the Sahel Alliance, also with a view to strengthening national security forces such as the police.

An exacerbating factor is that West Africa is also affected by the shifting priorities of U.S. foreign policy, and that there are plans to reduce the presence of U.S. troops in West Africa. China, on the other hand, has been expanding its presence in West Africa for years, and other international players such as Saudi-Arabia or the UAE are becoming active in the region.

Among the countries of Europe, France has traditionally been particularly active in the region. At a summit with the Sahel countries and selected international partners in mid-January 2020 in Pau, France has underlined how necessary it is that the international community redouble its efforts in the region and proposed an “*International Coalition for the Sahel*”. In order to ensure the necessary coherence with existing initiatives, it is important that other partners such as Germany, the EU, and other players, be actively involved into the further design of this coalition.

Germany is already making considerable contributions to the efforts of the international community – both in matters of development and security policy. Among other initiatives, it collaborates in the framework of the Sahel Alliance, makes available Bundeswehr contingents, and contributes funds in the framework of its initiative to increase troop capabilities.

In terms of development cooperation, Germany is engaged in various extensive programmes via its GIZ and KfW, via the EU and the UN system. Its focus lies on Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, but it is also active in many neighbouring countries such as Guinea, Togo, Benin, and Côte d’Ivoire.

By supporting decentralisation projects, Germany helps promote trust in government structures at a municipal level and helps countries make available basic services such as education, health care, and infrastructure. Infrastructure projects also improve access to water. Promoting sustainable agriculture contributes to job creation and food security, which works towards making the population more resilient. In regions where food insecurity is a particular problem, providing aid via the UN World Food Programme and UNICEF is supposed to help the population become more resilient. Cooperation with the World Bank aims at increasing social security in the light of climate change. Moreover, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) recently assumed the chairmanship of the steering group of the Sahel Alliance and committed itself to intensifying the development dialogue with the G5 and to launch even more joint projects in the framework of the Sahel Alliance, based on a four-point plan that aims at strengthening capacities of governments, increasing resilience in the population in the areas of social security and food,

creating opportunities by offering education and jobs, and stabilising adjacent coastal countries.

The Bundeswehr is present in the region via MINUSMA and EUTM Mali, as well as with bilateral training programmes. Materials deployed include high-value capabilities such as HERON 1 unmanned aerial vehicles. The CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group is of the opinion that these deployments must be continued, adapted in the light of developments, and be made more effective. Another German contribution consists in the deployment of police forces in the framework of MINUSMA and EUCAP Sahel Niger. The goal here is to support security-related institutions, especially police authorities, in the sustainable design of the necessary structures for a state based on the rule of law. This mission is co-financed from German budgetary resources as well as from funds for bilateral training aid for individual projects. The CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group is of the opinion that German police forces should continue and, if possible, even increase their participation.

Despite many achievements, the activities of the international community have so far not prevented further destabilisation in the region. Despite the engagement in the framework of the French military operation Serval against radical Islamic terrorists in Mali in 2013, the subsequent deployment of multilateral UN and EU missions, as well as the French anti-terrorism operation Barkhane, the situation in the region has continued to deteriorate, and the conflict has spread from northern and central Mali to Burkina Faso and Niger. Even though the decision to deploy the international missions had been the right one, and the situation would likely have deteriorated even more without international support, we must acknowledge that improvements or even a successful turnaround cannot yet be observed.

The large number of players on the spot means that coordinating between these players and the multilateral organisations is a highly complex task. Recent years have shown that even the EU engagement is all too often characterised by lengthy and complex consultation processes – a fact which has also led governments in the region to prefer bilateral cooperation.

III. A Framework for Reinforced Commitment in the Sahel Region

In the light of all these challenges, the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group considers it a matter of urgency to strengthen and render more efficient the coordination of the activities of the international community, the EU, and Germany in the Sahel. This also serves the important goal of fighting the root causes of refugee

movements. Lasting instability and a spread of legal vacuums may have considerable negative effects. Creating security, stability, and development opportunities is therefore in Europe's – and, of course, Germany's – vital interest.

The CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group therefore proposes the following:

1. In its own best interest, the European Union should, in cooperation with other partners of the international community, reinforce its commitment to the stabilisation and development of the Sahel. A stronger commitment in the region should also look at the countries of North and West Africa. Countries such as Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, or Ghana are potential anchors of stability – both in security-related and economic terms – and should therefore preventatively be made part of a comprehensive approach. Existing development and reform partnerships as well as further forms of cooperation with those countries offer a viable framework for such an approach.

2. In accordance with the above, and with a view to our commitment to a comprehensive approach, Germany should strive to obtain even more attention and a higher priority for the Sahel in the framework of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. To this end, the EU should develop a joint, comprehensive strategy. This requires a balanced and integrated approach that makes the political, diplomatic, economic, and development-related measures of the EU and its member states tie in with the necessary military engagements.

3. The Sahel countries need to improve cooperation among themselves, both at the national as well as on the G5 level and in the framework of ECOWAS. At the national level, one cannot fail to notice that concertation between decision-makers and ministries is often lacking; there are deficits when it comes to political and operative control, the development of local solutions, and the preparedness to assume responsibility, e.g., to overcome development obstacles or undertake reforms of the national security sectors of the G5 states. Promoting coordination among different players should thus be an important cause for Europe and Germany alike.

4. In the spirit of a comprehensive approach, civilian and security initiatives in the Sahel should be better integrated with one another. The many players on the spot – MINUSMA, EU, BARKHANE, international and bilateral donors – must proceed in a more coordinated and targeted way and also approach the local population. Founding the Sahel Alliance was an important first step in improving contacts to the civilian population. More projects in close cooperation with the G5 Sahel should follow, so that donor coordination can be further improved. Concertation of efforts also needs to be improved in the area of security policy.

5. In order to harmonise the diverse international commitments and thereby make them more targeted and effective, the German government should convene an international conference involving as many players as possible. This could be done in cooperation with a partner country (such as France) or with the EU, but above all, it needs to happen in close concertation with the Sahel countries.

6. Even more strongly than before, support for the Sahel countries should be based on clearly worded expectations. We need to set clear priorities. Target agreements with national partner governments should include provisions that make international support conditional upon progress in the area of good governance.

7. With a view to the unstable security situation, the existence of fragile states in the region, and the lack of trust of the population in military and police (also as a consequence of poor training and repeated human rights violations), strengthening government structures in the countries must be the international community's – and, by extension, Germany's – top priority. This includes increasing the capacities of government institutions and security forces (armed forces, gendarmerie, police, the judiciary, law enforcement) as well as territorial administration, and strengthening municipal structures to improve access to basic services. National anti-corruption agencies must be made visibly stronger. Economic growth, continuous improvements of the resilience of the population, e.g., against food insecurity, and better health care and education systems can help the Sahel countries reach their goal of reaping the economic benefits of a young population. Mismanagement – a problem in large parts of the Sahel – must be brought under control.

8. Germany, the EU, and the international community should expand their development initiatives in the spirit of the points above, thereby taking preventative action against further destabilisation in the region. Development and security are mutually dependent, and development cooperation can make an important contribution to mitigating conflict and making the recruitment efforts of terrorist groups less attractive to young people in the region. Above all, trust in government structures must be strengthened. Local government institutions in particular should receive support for providing basic services on the spot, such as clean drinking water, energy, and medical care. Education and employment prospects are also of key importance. Cooperation with the private sector should be intensified. Agriculture and the food sector have great potential to generate income and create jobs for people. Both sectors can offer viable alternatives to young people who might otherwise consider joining terrorist groups. Furthermore, our development cooperation should focus more strongly on making the local population more resilient and containing seemingly religiously motivated conflicts. Development cooperation should support countries in their

endeavours to mitigate shocks arising from crises and extreme weather events quickly and to provide food security. In addition, cooperation in the field of energy production can generate impetus for economic development. There should also be a stronger focus on the neighbouring countries of the G5; border regions in particular should receive support, with a particular focus on businesses and local administrations. Such initiatives could help prevent conflict from spreading.

9. Any reform of governance structures should include moves to increase transparency and controls. This includes strengthening civil societies, as genuine change towards more transparency and efficiency over the medium to long term can only happen if the civil society exerts pressure on its own élites.

10. It is as yet unclear to what extent the coronavirus crisis will confront the countries in the region with even greater humanitarian and economic challenges. However, it has become clear that managing the coronavirus crisis will be an important litmus test for countries in the region. Without international support, they will not be able to cope. In the absence of government structures that can enforce authority across the respective country and that the local population perceives as constructive players (which gives them the necessary degree of legitimacy), the region will continue to erode. At the same time, the international partners – who will also be struggling with the effects of the coronavirus crisis on their budgets and other resources – must be aware that they must not carelessly reduce their commitment to the Sahel in order to consolidate their own budgets.

11. Another important goal of the international security commitment must consist in promoting reforms of government institutions in the Sahel countries whose task it is to ensure public safety and security, including armed forces, police, judiciary, and law enforcement authorities. This will also include providing advice, training, and equipment for those institutions, as well strengthening their capacities. It means that we need to strengthen government structures in their entirety, including their ability to exercise the state monopoly on the use of force. Over the medium to long term, the countries in the region need to be able to ensure the safety and security of their territories on their own, both domestically and internationally, and to provide efficient public services to their citizens. International commitment – especially in matters of security – can and must only ever consider itself to be support for local agency.

12. The mandates for the EU missions EUTM, EUCAP Sahel Mali, and EUCAP Sahel Niger, as well as the bilateral training programmes must be adapted accordingly. This concerns both their previous geographic scope (expansion to all G5 Sahel countries) and the scope of their activities (move towards providing non-executive mentoring and advice in the close context of operations, as well as

increasing the number of trainers in relation to the EUTM Force Protection Unit). This will be the only way to enable local forces to develop and successfully apply their training in practical operations. At the same time, European capabilities that are technologically superior can offer support where needed, in order to make local security forces significantly more effective.

13. Germany's initiative to increase troop capabilities ("*Enable and Enhance Initiative*") is a valuable instrument. In 2019, this initiative equipped a Malian regiment with armoured vehicles, thereby enabling it to operate more effectively in problematic regions. The vehicles also increase protection for troops, which in turn increases troop motivation. This also serves the purpose of increasing local troop capabilities over the medium to long term. The international community should pursue this objective more strongly, both in the G5 Sahel countries and, prospectively, in other West African countries as well (Nigeria, Senegal, the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea).

14. Germany's commitment must undergo continuous evaluation, so that the sustainability of its efforts can be ensured. Expanding the activities of German soldiers to all of Mali and, step by step, all G5 Sahel countries, implies that the intensity of the Bundeswehr's operations will increase. This is why the Bundeswehr must be equipped with further high-value capabilities in the region, especially in the areas of protection (military balloons and HERON TP) and medical evacuation (MedEvac).

15. When it comes to the crises in the Sahel, we should expand our framework for analysis and action to the neighbouring countries at the Gulf of Guinea, as well as all of West Africa – especially Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Senegal. These countries are crucial for a stable economic development of the entire region. This is where the (as-yet limited) industries and infrastructures are concentrated (especially ports for goods and commodities exports). Coastal countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, which are economically stronger, have traditionally been important destinations for seasonal and permanent labour migration from the Sahel. These interdependencies must be considered as we strive to develop a stronger commitment in the West African region. We should also redouble our efforts in these countries to counter the further spreading of conflict and organised crime. Involving both the German and the local private sectors will play a key role in this.

16. Increase support for regional responsibility and integration: We need to involve the economically robust and hitherto stable coastal countries of West Africa, in the spirit of creating a larger framework for finding solutions. It is in these countries' vital interest to prevent instability from spreading. We should

therefore both ask for and support their commitment. This includes strengthening the regional integration of West Africa as a prerequisite for long-term development in the region.

17. In the long run, we will only be able to bring about lasting stability in the Sahel if we actively involve the North African countries of the Maghreb, and if they, in turn, exert a stabilising influence. Managing the crisis in Libya would therefore be of key importance for a stable development in the Sahel. We should continue our efforts to this end with renewed vigour. Algeria plays a decisive role as well, particularly as regards the Mali peace process (Agreement of Algiers). Tunisia as the only (if highly fragile) democracy in the Maghreb merits particular, targeted support as the country seeks to build up resilient democratic structures and a competitive SME sector. We should continue to actively involve these partners in particular.

18. As part of a new, comprehensive Sahel strategy, the EU should also find a concerted answer to China's growing influence in the region. A harmonised, targeted strategic communication of our initiatives vis-à-vis these African states should emphasise the advantage of a rules-based international order and increase the effectiveness of our engagement. On the long run, the EU should also seek an exchange with China on policies towards Africa, in order to build up trust and allow us to coordinate our respective engagements.

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