



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 10 November 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to Security Council resolution [2391 \(2017\)](#), in which the Council requested me, in close coordination with the members of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Niger – and the African Union, to report on the activities of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel and the support provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in this regard. The Council also adopted resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#), in which it decided to terminate the mandate of MINUSMA under resolution [2640 \(2022\)](#) and requested the Mission to “immediately start on 1 July 2023 the cessation of its operations, transfer of its tasks, as well as the orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal of its personnel, with the objective of completing this process by 31 December 2023”. The present letter covers the period from 9 May to 8 November 2023.

The security situation in the Sahel remains dire, as attacks by the Al-Qaida-affiliated Jama’a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara continue to have disastrous consequences for civilians, in particular in the Liptako-Gourma region in the tri-border area of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. In Burkina Faso, violent extremist groups have increasingly targeted civilians and national defence and security forces and continue to exploit the multifaceted challenges in the country. In the Niger, following the unconstitutional change of government on 26 July 2023, violence has been on the rise.

In Mali, against the backdrop of the drawdown and withdrawal of MINUSMA, hostilities have resumed between the Government and signatory armed groups to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, while violent activity by extremist groups is also on the rise. The escalation of conflict in the north of Mali may increase the risk of violent extremism in the south-east of Mauritania. Southwards, the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region is increasing the risk of violent extremism taking hold in coastal countries of West Africa.

In the east, the impact of military operations by Chad in the northern province of Tibesti and the border area with Libya in August remains to be seen. While some smuggling routes seem to have been disrupted, illicit trade is expected to further proliferate in the Chad-Libya-the Niger triangle.



## **Operationalization of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel**

Amid a deteriorating security situation in the Liptako-Gourma region, the Joint Force did not conduct operations during the reporting period. On 1 July 2023, the *État-major de Coordination de la Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel* was relocated to Niamey, in line with the restructuring of the Joint Force in January 2023 to focus on both operational coordination and the conduct of joint operations. On 26 July 2023, the European Union suspended its technical and equipment support to the *État-major de Coordination*, after the unconstitutional change of government in the Niger. The validation of the revised strategic concept of operations of the Joint Force is pending, as the Defence and Security Committee of the G5 Sahel did not meet in Niamey in August as planned.

### **Implementation of the technical agreement**

The logistical and operational support provided by MINUSMA to the Joint Force effectively ended on 23 June 2023, with the expiration of the tripartite agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the Executive Secretariat of the G5 Sahel, through which MINUSMA received funding for the delivery of life support consumables to the Joint Force. The final six weeks of the tripartite agreement were dedicated to meeting final grant reporting requirements.

Shortly thereafter, on 30 June, and at the request of the Transition Government of Mali, the Security Council decided to terminate the mandate of MINUSMA by resolution [2690 \(2023\)](#), which also resulted in the termination of the Mission's mandate to provide enhanced support to the Joint Force, as authorized under resolution [2391 \(2017\)](#).

### **Implementation of the human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework and the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces**

Following the end of the tripartite agreement in June 2023, MINUSMA ceased its logistical and operational support to the Joint Force; the Mission therefore did not conduct any risk assessments during the reporting period. Limited progress was made in relation to the implementation of the mitigation measures identified during previous reporting periods, with the redeployment of the Joint Force's headquarters out of Mali, making it more difficult for the Mission to follow up in that regard.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued to support the Joint Force in enhancing its compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law while building its capacity, up until the conclusion of the project on 31 August 2023. In July and August 2023, in separate sessions, OHCHR trained and sensitized 138 nationals from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the Niger representing the *État-major de Coordination de la Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel*, the G5 Sahel national coordination committees, provosts and members of the Nigerien battalion of the Joint Force based in Téra, the Niger. These training and sensitization efforts were focused on the protection of civilians, criminal investigation, technical and forensic policing, early warning mechanisms, the roles of Provost Marshals, the capture, detention, release and transfer of detainees and the principles and standards of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

## G5 Sahel secretariat and institutional framework

The Strategy for Development and Security, covering the period 2023–2033, and the Priority Investment Programme, covering the period 2023–2028, were both adopted at a ministerial meeting of the G5 Sahel held on 9 July 2023 in Nouakchott.

From 26 to 30 September 2023, the G5 Sahel Regional Cell for the Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism, in conjunction with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, undertook missions to Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali to share experiences on the role of Mauritanian women Islamic scholars in sensitizing vulnerable populations against violent extremism.

## Conclusion and observations

The G5 Sahel is at a crossroads. Mali withdrew from the G5 Sahel and its institutions on 15 May 2022. Several of the remaining States are facing sociopolitical instability, which aggravates a security context marked by the spread of violent extremism and the resurgence of illicit activities. The Joint Force, which has been positioning itself as a regionally led solution to the growing insecurity, including by complementing the multifaceted engagements of the United Nations and other international partners in the Sahel, is facing serious challenges. The situation prevailing in the Sahel region is all the more difficult in that the security environment is fragmented, involving a multiplicity of local, regional, international and private security actors, as well as vigilante and violent extremist groups.

Nonetheless, this context is also an opportunity to reflect on how the international community should renew its approaches to the Sahel region. Addressing governance shortfalls remains critical to ensuring lasting stability in the Sahel region. Military and security-centred solutions alone will not suffice. For its part, the United Nations will continue to support the countries of the Sahel in forging collective and multidimensional approaches oriented towards the promotion of sustainable development in order to address the root causes of the threats in the region.

As for the support from MINUSMA to the G5 Sahel Joint Force, I would like to once again take this opportunity to thank the European Union – the main partner of the United Nations in this endeavour – for its excellent cooperation under the tripartite agreement between the United Nations, the European Union and the Executive Secretariat of the G5 Sahel, which has enabled the Joint Force to make progress in its operationalization. Moving forward, in the light of the withdrawal of Mali from the G5 Sahel, the end of the tripartite agreement and the withdrawal of MINUSMA by 31 December 2023, I recommend that the Security Council terminate the reporting obligations of MINUSMA and the Secretariat under resolution [2391 \(2017\)](#).

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**