

Peacebuilding Commission Informal Meeting on the Situation in the Sahel

13 December 2017

Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion

Background

On 13 December 2017, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) convened a meeting to address the situation in the Sahel in response to the Security Council Presidential Statement of 20 January 2017 (S/PRST/2017/2). The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Cho Tae-yul, Chair of the PBC.

1. The Chair opened the meeting recalling that the Security Council Presidential Statement of 20 January 2017 (S/PRST/2017/2) emphasized the convening role of the PBC in mobilizing international support, in collaboration with the United Nations Office in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), for implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). In this connection, he also recalled the work done by the Commission since its first meeting on the Sahel on 6 March 2017, including the participation of the Chair in the fifth meeting of the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel held in N'Djamena, Chad (14 June), the informal interactive dialogue on the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin between members of the Commission and members of the Security Council (19 June), and the joint meeting of PBC and ECOSOC on the situation in the Sahel (28 June).
2. H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, briefed the Commission on the work of the United Nations in the Sahel. She noted that the region continued to face increasing challenges, which include terrorism, armed conflict, extreme poverty and underdevelopment, climate change, displacement, and the smuggling of people, drugs and arms. Recognizing that peace, security, development and human rights are intertwined and mutually reinforcing in the Sahel, she underscored the importance of addressing the root causes of these challenges in an integrated, comprehensive and coherent manner. She noted that the UN response should go beyond the regular country programmes and be regional, inclusive and led by national governments. In connection with UNISS, she informed that the Strategy has now been recalibrated, centering around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustaining Peace agenda. She noted that, to support implementation of the Strategy, the UN was expanding and strengthening its work and, in this connection, the UN Development System has been taking measures to improve coordination and coherence, by mapping the 17 strategies that are currently being implemented by UN agencies, funds and programmes in the Sahel. She also mentioned that the UN is developing an investment plan that will respond to the needs of the revamped UNISS, and will be aligned with the needs and priorities identified by the countries of the Sahel. She also stressed that, in order to ensure a coordinated response to the crisis, the UN was consulting with the World Bank, African Union, European Union, Alliance for the Sahel, and Member States, especially from the region.

3. The Deputy Secretary-General informed that the UN and partners were also working on a revised support plan for UNISS. She explained that the plan was meant to meet the priority needs of the people and communities in the Sahel, including nutrition and food security, education, respect for human rights, strengthen governance, and help to prevent violence and conflict. She also noted that the multi-dimensional challenges in the Sahel required a system-wide approach from the UN. Development aid and security and military responses should complement each other. She recognized the G5-Sahel Joint Force as a concrete demonstration of the region's determination to join efforts towards tackling these multidimensional challenges and also reiterated the importance of assisting countries of the Sahel in implementing the 2030 agenda. Finally, she welcomed the work of the Peacebuilding Fund in building and sustaining peace and development through a more integrated, coherent and comprehensive approach. She concluded by noting that the UN would be at the forefront of the international response in the Sahel and that it will continue to provide the overarching framework within which other strategies and initiatives could flourish.
4. The Permanent Representative of Mali, H.E. Mr. Issa Konfourou, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the G5 Sahel, thanked the Commission for continuing its engagement in the Sahel and for inviting the countries of the G5 Sahel. He underscored the fact that the Sahel is facing enormous challenges, spanning from security to development, including youth employment and climate change. He welcomed the decision of the Security Council to adopt resolution 2391 (2017), which stressed the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict in the Sahel region.
5. Member States welcomed the decision of the PBC Chair to convene another meeting on the Sahel and highlighted the following issues:
 - The leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General was welcomed in ensuring a coordinated and coherent UN system-wide effort towards the implementation of the UNISS.
 - The importance of the UN was recognized to further foster coherence and complementarity of its humanitarian, development and peace and security interventions in support of the countries and people in the Sahel region. The Commission the focus on empowering women and youth, and ensuring their participation in the peacebuilding processes in the Sahel region was welcomed
 - The PBC has been making efforts throughout the year to sustain international attention and support to the Sahel region. The value of the PBC consists in its capacity to convene a broad range of partners and to bridge the main UN bodies, and in this regard, the Commission can provide a useful platform to discuss the new support plan for the Sahel.
 - The PBF is an important tool to strengthen coherence and integration.
 - In view of the multifaceted nature of the challenges in the region, and the need to have a coherent response from the UN, the Sahel should be considered as a test case for the Secretary-General's reform agenda.

- National ownership must continue to drive the engagement in the region, and in this connection, initiatives like the G5 Sahel was welcomed.
 - It was proposed to convene another PBC meeting, together with the Deputy Secretary-General, DPKO and other relevant stakeholders, to come up with a roadmap on how the PBC can assist with the implementation of UNISS. It was also proposed that PBC could select several issues from UNISS, rather than address the strategy as a whole, in helping to make progress with the implementation of UNISS.
6. In response to several comments made by Member States, the Deputy Secretary-General raised the following issues:
- The PBC platform and support is important in strengthening the work the UN in the Sahel region.
 - Building capacity and institutions in the Sahel region is a priority.
 - Partnerships with the countries in the region, regional and international actors are key in addressing the challenges in the Sahel. While the UN can play a leading role, collaborative efforts are required.
 - The Sahel represents a test case for the ongoing UN reforms.
7. The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General and all speakers for having shared a broad perspective of the challenges facing the Sahel as well as the ongoing efforts to enhance the coherence of national, regional and international efforts to support the implementation of UNISS. The Chair mentioned that the PBC should consider the proposals of the Members, including devising a roadmap to assist the UN with the implementation of UNISS, and mobilizing relevant stakeholders in a few areas of UNISS in close consultations with the countries in the region and the UN. He also noted that, as incoming Vice-Chair of the PBC in 2018, he would work to ensure that the Commission continue to support UNOWAS in the implementation of the strategy for the Sahel.
