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**MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ENHANCEMENT  
OF SECURITY COOPERATION AND THE  
OPERATIONALISATION OF THE AFRICAN  
PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE  
IN THE SAHELO-SAHRAN REGION**

**NOUAKCHOTT, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF MAURITANIA,  
17 MARCH 2013**

**NOUAKCHOTT CONCLUSIONS**



## NOUAKCHOTT CONCLUSIONS

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. As part of the follow up to the communiqué of the meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), held on 25 January 2013, at the level of Heads of State and Government, and the conclusions of the meeting of the Support and Follow up Group, held in Brussels, on 5 February 2013, a consultative meeting on security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan region was held in Nouakchott, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, on 17 March 2013.

2. Ministers and other representatives of the following countries of the region participated in the meeting: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The following organizations and structures also took part in the meeting: the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Joint Operational Command (CEMOC), the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services in Africa (CISSA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU), the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL) and the United Nations (UN). In addition, China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States of America attended the meeting as observers, in their capacity as permanent members of the UN Security Council.

### **II. OBJECTIVES**

3. The objectives of the meeting were the following:

- a) facilitate the deepening of security cooperation between the countries concerned, through the coordination and strengthening of border control measures, as well as through intelligence sharing. In so doing, the objective is to combat more effectively the criminal and terrorist networks operating in northern Mali and to help the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to better fulfill its mandate; and
- b) initiate a process of consultations on the modalities for the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region, particularly considering the fact that the geographic coverage of the existing APSA structures do not exactly correspond to the configuration of the region.

### **III. OUTCOME**

4. The meeting reached the following conclusions on the overall situation in Mali and on some specific aspects:

#### **a) On the overall situation in Mali**

5. The participants welcomed the positive developments in the situation in Mali, notably the liberation of the main towns in northern Mali following the launch, on 11 January 2013, of the joint Franco-Malian operation, with the support of ECOWAS and

Chadian forces. They also welcomed the significant progress made in the deployment of AFISMA, and called on those countries that have made troop pledges to fulfill them. They further expressed satisfaction at the ongoing operations to secure and stabilize northern Mali and the contribution of the neighboring countries, particularly through enhanced border control measures. The participants further noted with satisfaction the adoption of the Roadmap for the Transition, whose implementation would culminate in the holding of presidential and legislative elections in July 2013. The participants also took note of the establishment by the Government of Mali of the Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission. The participants called on the Malian transitional authorities to expeditiously implement the Roadmap. They also drew attention to the proliferation of militias in some parts of Mali.

6. The participants acknowledged that the Sahelo-Saharan region continues to face serious security challenges, linked especially to terrorism, transnational crime and the proliferation of weapons. They affirmed their determination to make renewed efforts to address these challenges.

**b) Specific Aspects**

*i) Enhancement of Security Cooperation*

7. The participants agreed on the need to spare no effort to consolidate the progress made in terms of security, facilitate the implementation of AFISMA's mandate and strengthen regional security and stability. In this regard, they stressed the need to enhance cooperation among the neighboring countries of Mali, and pledged to take all necessary measures for this purpose.

8. The participants agreed, in particular, on the following measures to be implemented in the short, medium and long-terms:

- (i) the strengthening of border security through appropriate specific measures to prevent movements of terrorist and criminal groups. The countries concerned shall notify the AU Commission, within two weeks from the date of this meeting, the measures taken by them and their implementation modalities;
- (ii) the enhancement of intelligence sharing, through the UFL and other structures. In this regard, the ACSRT will convene regular meetings of its Focal Points within the countries and organizations concerned. The first such meeting will be held in Bamako within one month of the date of this meeting;
- (iii) the establishment by the ACSRT of an adequate communication infrastructure to facilitate secure intelligence sharing among all stakeholders;
- (iv) the strengthening of national capacities, including through exchange of experiences, training and equipment, based on the capacity-building initiatives currently undertaken by UN agencies, bilateral partners and the measures agreed to at the Tripoli regional ministerial conference on border security, as well as the framework provided by the AU Border Programme (AUBP) and other related initiatives. In this

regard, the AU Commission will prepare, in consultation with the relevant partners, a programme of activities to be implemented during the year 2013, based on and as accurate as possible identification of the needs;

- (v) the launching by the ACSRT of assessment missions in the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan space to evaluate their capacity to fight against terrorism and to identify areas in which assistance would be needed, and the effective follow-up of the recommendations made by the missions already undertaken in the countries of the region; and
- (vi) the intensification by Mali of its efforts towards the reform of its security and defence sector, to enable it fully assume its responsibilities in the promotion of regional security and stability.

ii) Transformation of AFISMA into a UN Operation

9. The participants took note of the ongoing efforts to transform AFISMA into a UN operation. In this regard, they stressed the relevance of the observations made by the AU PSC at its meeting held on 7 March 2013. In particular, they underscored the imperative need for the proposed United Nations operation to be provided with a robust mandate, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to support the Malian Government in preserving the country's unity and in strengthening its authority over its entire territory, including the fight against the terrorist and criminal networks, and the protection of civilians, as well as to contribute to the enhancement of regional cooperation in the area of security and to support the initiatives of the countries of the region. They requested the Commission to closely follow the process and to ensure that the concerns expressed by the PSC are properly taken into account.

iii) Operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region

10. The participants also discussed the operationalisation of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The operationalisation process should take into account the inappropriateness of the geographical coverage of the different existing structures.

11. The participants stressed the need for greater synergy among the different components of the African Standby Force (ASF) covering the region (North, West and Central) and which have reached their operational capacity, to address the security challenges faced by the Sahelo-Saharan region. The steps to be taken should aim at ensuring closer cooperation in the field of intelligence sharing, training and equipment, as well as at building the required operational capability to address the challenges faced on the ground.

12. Within this framework, the participants agreed to the following:

- (i) the transmission by the countries and organizations concerned of their views and proposals on the modalities for operationalizing and strengthening the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region, on the basis of a questionnaire prepared by the AU Commission;

- (ii) the preparation by the AU Commission, based on the responses to the questionnaire and its own assessment of the situation, of a report on the modalities for the operationalization of APSA in the region, taking into account ongoing efforts, results achieved and challenges faced; and
- (iii) the convening by the Commission of a meeting of the countries concerned to consider the above-mentioned report and agree on the best way forward.

13. The participants expressed concern at the humanitarian situation in the region, exacerbated by the Malian crisis, and encouraged the countries concerned to take the necessary steps to ensure compliance with the norms governing the establishment of refugees and internally displaced persons camps, and to ensure the security of those areas, in coordination with humanitarian agencies.

#### **IV. FOLLOW UP**

14. The participants agreed to meet regularly, at different levels, to deepen their cooperation. As stated above, the ACSRT Focal Points and other designated representatives will meet at least once every two months to exchange on the evolution of the security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region and to ensure the necessary follow up. The relevant Ministers will meet at least once every six months.

#### **V. THANKS**

15. The participants thanked the Government of Mauritania for all the arrangements made for the smooth holding of the meeting. In particular, they expressed their deep gratitude to President Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz, for his personal commitment and support for this initiative.