



Speech by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE G5 SAHEL JOINT
FORCE

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Co-Presidents,

Allow me to start by welcoming your initiative in holding this meeting. It is very timely, on our return from Mali and Burkina Faso, and in view of the forthcoming G5 Sahel deadlines, which the Security Council will soon have to discuss.

Co-Presidents,

The initiative of Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad to unite their forces to promote peace and development in the Sahel deserves our attention. Belgium consequently supports their request to place the G5 Sahel Joint Force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Furthermore, to guarantee sufficient and lasting funding, we also support this African force being funded by compulsory United Nations contributions under well-defined conditions.

In the meantime, Belgium has supported and continues to support the full operationalisation of the Joint Force; last year, Belgium paid one million euros so that MINUSMA could provide logistical support for this Joint Force. Belgium also supports the G5 Sahel Defence College, for which it provides military trainers.

Co-Presidents,

Belgium particularly welcomes two positive recent developments, as they are important for the Security Council: the relaunching of the Joint Force operations in January and the gradual introduction of the Compliance Framework for human rights and international humanitarian law.

We strongly encourage the G5 Sahel to continue its work in these two areas.

Admittedly, some of the equipment promised to the Force has not yet been delivered and this has an impact on operation planning. But other resources exist and there is nothing to prevent these being used immediately. The Compliance Framework for human rights, the operation of the Permanent Secretariat, the development of the police component, the creation of the new HQ, the drafting of an updated concept of operations and the introduction of an international coordination mechanism such as the Monitoring Group are examples of areas in which the G5 Sahel can easily continue its operational work with the resources already available.

Co-Presidents,

Belgium regrets the worrying developments in the security and humanitarian situation in part of the Sahel, of which the recent massacre of civilians in a village near Bankass in Mali is a reminder. The border areas remain particularly sensitive.

As in any crisis, the solution is first and foremost political and there are a number of actions to be taken. A firm response is clearly needed at the security level: dismantling terrorist networks, cutting off their funding sources and foiling their deadly narrative. But it is also important to address the aspirations of the people in terms of development, the provision of basic

services and the fight against impunity; respecting human rights, combating all forms of stigmatisation against certain ethnic groups or communities, and also fighting impunity.

A comprehensive governance effort is therefore required in these territories so that the people can live a normal, peaceful and dignified life.

Co-Presidents,

Belgium supports the tripartite arrangement between the G5 Sahel, the EU and MINUSMA. We regret the under-use of resources due to the absence of operations, as well as the relatively restricted framework of conditionality imposed on MINUSMA. We are therefore in favour of a reasonable geographic extension of this MINUSMA support wherever it could be useful to the Joint Force. The enemies of peace know no borders.

Lastly, I would like to welcome once again the initiative of the G5 Sahel countries and ensure them of Belgium's support in this partnership.

Thank you.