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4<sup>TH</sup> MINISTERIAL MEETING OF COUNTRIES  
PARTICIPATING IN THE NOUAKCHOTT PROCESS

NOUAKCHOTT, MAURITANIA  
17 DECEMBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION STATUS  
OF THE NOUAKCHOTT PROCESS AND THE MODALITIES FOR ITS ENHANCEMENT**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The first ministerial meeting on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan region, held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on 17 March 2013, outlined a series of measures to address the security challenges facing the region. In particular, it was agreed that the relevant Ministers would meet at least once every six months, while the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services (HISS) would meet once every two months. The Conclusions of the Nouakchott ministerial meeting are herewith attached as Annex.

2. At their 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting held in Niamey, Niger, on 19 February 2014, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the region proposed the holding of a Summit of the countries participating in the Nouakchott Process, to mobilize greater political support to the Process and enhance its ownership by the countries of the region. Following consultations between the relevant Mauritanian authorities and the Commission, it was agreed that the proposed Summit would take place on 18 December 2014, in Nouakchott, and that it would be preceded by a preparatory meeting at ministerial level, on 17 December 2014.

3. This report first presents a general overview of the situation in the region, before taking stock of the implementation of the Nouakchott Process and outlining the next steps towards its enhancement. The report concludes with observations on the way forward.

**II. SITUATION IN THE SAHEL AND REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS**

**a) Overall security situation**

4. The situation in the Sahel is marked by the continued attempts of the terrorist organizations to regroup in northern Mali and their increased attacks, including the use of improvised explosive devices, against the Malian army, the United Nations (UN) Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the French forces of the Barkhane operation. Mention should also be made of the continued and indiscriminate attacks carried out by the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria and in neighboring countries. The situation is compounded by the proliferation of arms emanating from Libyan military depots, as well as by the escalation of violence and the weakening of State authority in Libya, as a result of which terrorist groups have found safe havens in some parts of that country. It is also worth noting the numerous instances of drug seizure, which are evidence of the extent of illegal drug trafficking in the region and the growing links between terrorism and transnational organized crime.

5. At their various meetings, the countries participating in the Nouakchott Process, while noting with satisfaction the progress made in addressing the prevailing security challenges, also acknowledged that the security situation remains a source of deep concern. Consequently, they stressed the need for continued vigilance and determined efforts to

deepen security cooperation on the basis of a common vision of collective security, transparency and shared responsibility.

**b) Country-specific developments**

*(i) Mali*

6. The period since the Nouakchott ministerial meeting was marked by significant progress in Mali. The process of restoring constitutional order was successfully completed, with the organization of the two rounds of the presidential election on 28 July and 11 August 2013, respectively, followed by the organization of parliamentary elections. The presidential election, which was won by Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, took place in conditions deemed to be free and fair by all election observation missions. The parliamentary elections, whose first and second rounds were held on 24 November and 15 December 2013, were also considered to be free and fair by all election observation missions. Parliament began its work in mid-January 2014. The Malian authorities are endeavoring to consolidate the gains made. The AU, particularly through its Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), established after the transformation, on 1 July 2013, of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) into a UN operation – MINUSMA, actively supports the ongoing efforts in Mali.

7. At the request of the Malian authorities, Algeria began a formal negotiation process between the Government and the northern armed movements, in mid-June 2014, with the support of the AU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the UN, the European Union (EU) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), as well as of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. On 24 July 2014, the Malian parties signed a Roadmap outlining the basic principles and references of the negotiations and determining the different issues to be discussed. Three rounds of talks have since been held, in August, September, October and November 2014, the latest one being sanctioned by a draft Accord that was given to the parties for consideration. The negotiations are expected to resume in mid-January 2015, and to result in the conclusion of an agreement.

*(ii) Burkina Faso*

8. In Burkina Faso, the past months were marked by a series of demonstrations led by civil society organizations and the political opposition to block the proposed amendment to Article 37 of the Constitution which provides for the limitation to two of the number of mandates that a President of the Republic can serve. These events assumed a massive scale on 30 and 31 October 2014, as the National Assembly was preparing to consider the proposed constitutional revision, forcing President Blaise Compaore to resign. The army, through Colonel Isaac Zida, decided to assume state power, after having suspended the Constitution and dissolved the National Assembly. In a communiqué issued on 1 November 2014, the Chairperson of the AU Commission called for a civilian-led and consensual transition in Burkina Faso, and also appointed a Special Envoy in the person of Mr. Edem Kodjo, a member of the AU Panel of the Wise. On 3 November 2014, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) reiterated the need for a civilian-led transition and demanded that the military should hand over power to the civilians within two weeks or face sanctions. Other initiatives were also taken both by ECOWAS, in particular through a Contact Group led by President

Macky Sall of Senegal, and by the Chairperson of the Union, President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz of Mauritania. In addition, the AU, ECOWAS and the UN sent two joint missions to Ouagadougou during the same period.

9. It was against this background that the Constitution was restored. This breakthrough was followed by the adoption by the Burkinabe stakeholders of a Transitional Charter and the appointment of a civilian, Mr. Michel Kafando, as President of the Transition, which is to last 12 months, after which elections will be organized. At its meeting held on 18 November 2014, the PSC, noting the positive evolution of the situation, decided not to take the measures that had been envisaged in its communiqué of 3 November 2014, including the suspension of the participation of Burkina Faso in AU's activities. Subsequently, Lt. Col. Isaac Zida was appointed Prime Minister and a new Government was formed; a Transitional National Council was also established.

(iii) Libya

10. Libya continues to face many challenges, including the deterioration of the security situation with increased and destructive fighting by rival armed militias in Tripoli and Benghazi, in particular, as well as serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The fighting has worsened the humanitarian situation and compounded the political crisis in the country, with the establishment of two parallel legislative and executive bodies. The internationally-recognized Government led by Prime Minister Abdullah Al-Thinni and the newly-elected legislative, the House of Representatives, had to relocate to Tobruk, following the takeover of Tripoli, in August 2014, by a coalition of militias under the Libya's Dawn Operation. A parallel administration, with Mr. Omar al-Hasi as Prime Minister, and the previous legislative body, the General National Congress (GNC), now operate from Tripoli. The political climate was further polarized by the decision of Libya's Supreme Court, on 6 November 2014, invalidating the June 2014 election of the House of Representatives.

11. The AU, including through its Special Envoy, maintains close consultations both with the Libyan stakeholders and the relevant regional and international actors. Following the PSC meeting held in New York, on 23 September 2014, an International Contact Group for Libya (ICG-L) was established to facilitate a coordinated and harmonized international engagement in Libya. The ICG-L convened its inaugural meeting in Addis Ababa on 3 December 2014. Furthermore, the PSC supported the establishment of a High-Level Committee of Heads of State and Government to enable the AU to more effectively support the peace and reconciliation efforts in Libya. The neighboring countries are also actively engaged in the search for a solution to the crisis. They have so far convened five ministerial meetings. Within this framework, a security committee and a political committee have been established, headed by Algeria and Egypt, respectively. Finally, the UN, through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, has taken a number of initiatives aimed at facilitating a cessation of hostilities and a political dialogue.

**III. ENHANCEMENT OF SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION**

12. As indicated above, the Nouakchott ministerial meeting agreed on the convening of regular meetings of the HISS of the countries of the region. To date, the Commission has

organized six such meetings. The first meeting was held in Bamako, on 18 April 2013; the second in Abidjan, on 20 and 21 June 2013; the third in N'Djamena, on 10 September 2013; the fourth in Niamey, on 19 February 2014; the fifth in Ouagadougou, on 19 and 20 May 2014; and the sixth in Dakar, on 13 and 14 November 2014. These meetings, which result in the adoption of operational conclusions, provide a unique opportunity to exchange views on the overall situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region, deepen security cooperation among the countries concerned and review national and regional capacity building activities, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the efforts undertaken to prevent and combat terrorism and transnational organized crime. They have also proved to be a valuable tool for confidence building. It should be noted that, in addition to the countries of the region, participants to the meetings of the Nouakchott Process include the following structures and organizations: the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), ECOWAS, the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL), MISAHÉL and the Northern African Regional Capability (NARC), as well as the UN (MINUSMA, the UN Office in West Africa – UNOWA and the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Sahel Region – OSES).

13. As a follow-up to the operational conclusions of the meetings of the HISS and the conclusions of the ministerial meetings, a number of activities have been carried out since the launching of the Nouakchott Process. In this respect, it is worth highlighting the following:

**a) Exchange of information and intelligence**

14. Significant progress has been made in facilitating interaction among the countries and organizations participating in the Nouakchott Process, in order to ensure continuous updating on the security situation in the region and the status of the threats posed by the terrorist and criminal groups. Notably, these interactions take place during the meetings of the HISS. In order to facilitate this process, the Commission took steps to ensure the exchange of the contact details of the HISS. Furthermore, and as a follow-up to the Ouagadougou operational conclusions, the Commission prepared a format for the presentations at the regular meetings of the HISS. This format was approved by the HISS at their Dakar meeting.

15. Noting the delay sometimes experienced in the exchange of intelligence among the relevant Services, the HISS agreed to take appropriate measures to expedite the communication of operational information, bearing in mind their urgent nature. Accordingly, they agreed that in-between the regular meetings of the HISS, all concerned should be encouraged to exchange intelligence briefs on specific events requiring urgent coordinated action.

16. During their meetings, the HISS also discussed the contribution of CISSA to the work of the relevant Services in the Sahelo-Saharan region. They stressed the need and urgency for strengthening that contribution. They agreed to discuss this issue in-depth, bearing in mind that CISSA has now been integrated into the AU Commission.

**b) Periodic meetings of the Defense Attachés of the countries participating in the Nouakchott Process**

17. In-between the regular meetings of the HISS, MISAHEL convenes periodic meetings of the Defense Attachés of the countries participating in the Nouakchott Process accredited to Mali. At their Ouagadougou meeting, the HISS welcomed these consultations, stressing that they contribute significantly to a greater ownership of the Process by the countries of the region.

**c) Establishment of a secure communication system**

18. One of the issues that received sustained attention from the HISS relates to the establishment of a secure communication system among the intelligence and security services of the countries of the region. At their Abidjan meeting, the HISS stressed the need for the early establishment of such a system by CISSA, within the framework of the enlarged system programmed for all the CISSA member services. At the same time, it was agreed that the AU Commission should, as appropriate, encourage the development of research on secure networks, by making use of the relevant African institutions.

19. Given the delays experienced in the operationalization of the CISSA secure communications system, the UFL offered, as an interim arrangement, to extend its own system to three countries of the Nouakchott Process that are not members of the UFL (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Senegal), as well as to ACSRT, CISSA and MISAHEL. This offer was welcomed by the HISS at their Abidjan meeting. The UFL has since extended its secure communication system to Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and MISAHEL. At their Dakar meeting, the HISS commended the UFL for the work done, with the help of Algeria, to facilitate timely exchange of information and intelligence within the framework of a secure communication system. They noted the commitment made by the CISSA to overcome, as soon as possible, the difficulties faced in the establishment of its own secure communication system. Furthermore, they stressed the need for the Member States and organizations involved in the Nouakchott Process to take full advantage of the establishment of the secure communication system to enhance their cooperation. They requested the UFL to develop operational procedures for exchange of information and intelligence, so as to ensure an optimum use of the system. From 10 to 11 December 2014, the UFL, with the support of the Algerian Services, organized a technical training on its secure communication system for its end-users.

**d) Follow up to the communiqué of the PSC Nairobi meeting on terrorism and violent extremism in Africa**

20. As a follow-up to the relevant provisions of decision Assembly AU/Dec.536(XXIII) on the report of the PSC on its Activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa, adopted by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 26 to 27 June 2014, the PSC convened a Summit devoted to the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism on the continent, in Nairobi, on 2 September 2014. The communiqué adopted on that occasion outlined a number of steps aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of counter-terrorism and other related efforts on the continent. At their Dakar meeting, the HISS had an exchange of views on the best ways and means of ensuring a

regular follow-up of the relevant provisions of the communiqué. They agreed to continue this exchange, with the view to identifying practical steps to be implemented by the relevant Services of the region.

**e) Counter-radicalization and violent extremism**

21. Terrorist groups exploit and capitalize on social grievances, unresolved conflicts, personal or community identity claims, religion, history, marginalization, exclusion and a host of other factors, to produce an ideological narrative that creates an enabling environment for recruitment and radicalization, where the commission of terrorist acts becomes appealing as an instrument of political activism. Consequently, the issue of radicalization has featured prominently on the deliberations of the HISS and the Ministers of the region. At their Ouagadougou meeting, the HISS stressed the need, building on the relevant regional experiences, for more vigorous action to deal with that phenomenon, including the surveillance and monitoring of the activities of foreign preachers, who operate in isolated communities and regions and propagate intolerant interpretation of the religion. This appeal was reiterated at the Dakar meeting.

**f) Links with transnational organized crime**

22. The links between terrorism and transnational organized crime have become clearer, with terrorist groups increasingly exploiting the pre-existing informal trade routes, as well as the black and illicit markets, to generate resources. As noted by the HISS and the Ministers in their various meetings, this connection is particularly true in the Sahel region.

**g) African Arrest Warrant**

23. As part of their efforts to more effectively combat terrorism and transnational organized crime, the countries of the region expressed support to the ongoing AU's efforts to elaborate an African arrest warrant for persons charged with or convicted of terrorist acts. In this respect, it is worth noting that initial consultations have been undertaken with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as with the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit (EuroJust). Steps are being taken to hire a legal consultant to coordinate the process of developing the African arrest warrant.

**h) Other activities**

24. A number of other activities have also been undertaken. These include :

- (i) the production and dissemination, since July 2013, of a special edition of the ACSRT's Daily News Highlights devoted to the Sahel region;
- (ii) the transmission to the countries of the region of AU and ECOWAS documents related to the fight against terrorism, to facilitate the implementation of the relevant commitments contained therein; and

- (iii) the dissemination of the AU Model-Law on the Prevention and Combatting of Terrorism to the HISS and communication of information on the type of assistance available.

**i) Steps to be implemented**

25. While significant progress has been made, some measures agreed upon within the context of the Nouakchott Process remain outstanding. These include:

- (i) the identification of existing security measures and agreements between the countries of the region and the assessment of their implementation status, with the aim of supporting their operationalization and improving their operational efficiency, if necessary. A questionnaire is being prepared and will be sent shortly to the Member States of the Nouakchott Process;
- (ii) the presentation of a report on the emerging and non-conventional threats to peace and security in the region;
- (iii) the effective follow-up of the recommendations of the assessment mission that visited Niger, from 10 to 15 June 2013;
- (iv) the conduct of a study on the impact that the action of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant could have on the configuration and the evolution of the terrorist groups in the Sahelo-Saharan region;
- (v) the organization, by MISAHHEL, in liaison with the ACSRT, of a campaign against radicalization and violent extremism in the region; and
- (vi) the presentation by the UFL, at the next meeting of the HISS, of an assessment of the functioning of the secure communication system, including a statistical overview of its actual use.

**IV. ASSESSMENT MISSIONS AND OTHER RELATED ACTIVITIES**

**a) ACSRT assessment missions**

26. As part of the Nouakchott Process and its own Strategic Plan of Activities for the period 2010-2013, the ACSRT conducted evaluation missions in a number of Member States, including those participating in the Nouakchott Process. The objective is to assess the capacity of the concerned countries to fulfill their commitments under the AU Plan of Action (PoA) (2002) and relevant AU and international counter-terrorism decisions and instruments, as well as to develop recommendations on measures to be taken by the visited Member States and identify areas in which they may require or provide technical assistance.

**b) Other missions**

27. *Niger*: At its 21<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session, held in Addis Ababa, from 26 to 27 May 2013, the Assembly of the Union adopted a *Declaration on the terrorist attacks in Niger and on the*

*solidarity of Africa with the Republic of Niger [Assembly/AU/Decl.2(XXI)]*. In this Declaration, the Assembly, having strongly condemned the attacks in Agadez and Arlit, on 23 May 2013, requested the Commission to urgently send an assessment mission to Niger to determine modalities for assistance to that country. Consequently, the Commission dispatched a mission comprising the ACSRT, CISSA and UFL to Niger, from 10 to 15 June 2013. The mission visited Niamey, Agadez and Arlit, to conduct consultations with the relevant Nigerien authorities, assess the security threats and the measures taken by the authorities, and make recommendations on the assistance that Niger may require.

28. *Libya*: As a follow-up to the Abidjan operational conclusions, and at the invitation of the Libyan Government, a joint ACSRT, CISSA and UFL mission was undertaken to Libya, from 3 to 5 September 2013. The objective of the mission was to: (i) obtain firsthand information about the measures taken by the Libyan Government to address challenges relating to border security; (ii) discuss modalities for cooperation between Libya and the countries of the region; and (iii) agree on effective communication modalities between Libya, on the one hand, the ACSRT, CISSA and UFL, on the other, as well as on modalities of support to Libya. The joint consultative mission was followed by the organization by the Commission, in cooperation with the Libyan Government, of the Workshop on Operational Strengthening of Security at Land Borders in the Sahelo-Saharan Region, in Tripoli, on 4 and 5 September 2013. At their Niamey meeting, the Ministers agreed on the need for renewed efforts to assist Libya address the challenges facing it. Subsequently, and ahead of the meeting then scheduled to take place in Rome on 6 March 2014, under the auspices of the Italian and Libyan Governments, to mobilize more effective international support for Libya, the neighboring countries and Libya held consultations, in Niamey, on 1 March 2014, with the AU and CENSAD support, in order to harmonize their positions.

#### **V. NEUTRALIZATION OF BOKO HARAM AND OTHER TERRORIST GROUPS OPERATING IN NORTHERN MALI**

29. At their various meetings, the countries of the region stressed the need to pursue and intensify the efforts deployed to neutralize the Boko Haram group. A special session was devoted to this issue during the Ouagadougou meeting of the HISS. Subsequently, both the Assembly of the Union, at its 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session, and the PSC addressed the issue and took important decisions. In particular, the 469<sup>th</sup> meeting of the PSC held on 25 November 2014 welcomed the final communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), held in Niamey, on 7 October 2014, and which decided to establish a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin, to coordinate the efforts to combat the Boko Haram terrorist group, including the establishment of the MNJTF Headquarters and the deployment by the LCBC Member States and Benin of the pledged contingents within their national borders. The PSC expressed full support for the establishment and deployment of the MNJTF, which represents an appropriate framework for effectively neutralizing the Boko Haram terrorist group. The PSC requested the Commission to undertake urgent consultations with the LCBC Member States and Benin and to avail the necessary expertise to facilitate the early provision of the required international support. The Commission is taking the necessary steps in this respect. It should be noted that, at their Dakar meeting, the HISS welcomed the initiatives taken by the LCBC Member States and Benin, particularly the establishment of the MNJTF.

30. With regard to northern Mali, and in view of the increase in terrorist attacks in that region, a meeting of the African troop contributing countries to MINUSMA was convened in Niamey, on 5 November 2014, with the participation of the Commission. The objective was to identify practical measures to enable MINUSMA more effectively discharge its mandate. In this regard, specific recommendations were made, focusing particularly on the enhancement of MINUSMA's operational capabilities, as well as on the generation of additional forces, to enable the Mission attain its authorized strength. Furthermore, the meeting requested the Commission to expeditiously carry out an in-depth study of the proposed establishment, within the framework of the Nouakchott Process, of a Rapid Intervention Force in northern Mali, and to submit detailed recommendations to the PSC. The objective is to strengthen the action being carried out against the terrorist and criminal groups operating in that part of the country. The 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the HISS fully supported the Conclusions of the Niamey meeting. It decided to include systematically in its agenda an item on the implementation of the mandate of MINUSMA and the follow-up to the Conclusions of the Niamey meeting. Earlier on, the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the HISS had stressed the need to enhance cooperation with MINUSMA, including through the allocation of specific posts to the countries of the region in the Headquarters of the Force.

## **VI. CAPACITY BUILDING**

31. During their various meetings, the countries of the region stressed the importance of capacity building and other training activities on the collection and analysis of intelligence information. In this regard, the ACSRT, CISSA and the UFL elaborated a capacity building matrix to guide the activities to be undertaken in support of Member States.

32. Since the launching of the Nouakchott Process, the following capacity building activities have been undertaken by the ACSRT, in collaboration with other relevant African institutions and with the support of international partners:

- a. a workshop for capacity building on the theme : "*International Best Practices of Criminal Justice in the Investigation and Judgment of Terrorism Cases: the case of covert operations and the protection of sensitive intelligence information*", held in Algiers on 1 and 2 October 2013, with the support of the United States Mission to the AU (USAU);
- b. three training courses on the analysis of operational intelligence, organized in Algiers and Bamako, from 23 September to 1 October, from 4 to 12 November 2013, and from 9 to 17 December 2014, with the financial and technical support of the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany (Bundeskriminalamt);
- c. a training workshop on the strengthening of judicial response to terrorism cases, held in Algiers from 5 to 7 December 2013;
- d. a meeting of coordinators of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) against terrorism, held in Addis Ababa, from 6 to 7 December 2013, with the support of the Spanish Government;

- e. a workshop on the implementation of the “Memorandum of Algiers on the best practices regarding the prevention of kidnapping against payment of ransom by terrorists and the elimination of the attendant benefits”, held in Algiers from 4 to 6 February 2014, in cooperation with the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF);
  - f. assessment visits by ACSRT to Côte d’Ivoire and Chad from 18 to 22 and from 24 to 29 November 2013, respectively, to assess the existing capacities and the best ways and means to strengthen them;
  - g. a workshop on strengthening border related counter-terrorism capacities in the Sahel region, through international databases and enhanced cooperation, coordination and information exchanges, jointly organized by the ACSRT and the UFL, in Algiers, from 3 to 5 March 2014;
  - h. the launching by the ACSRT, in cooperation with the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS), of national courses on the implementation of the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy. These courses benefit the member countries of the Nouakchott Process that are members of ECOWAS; and
  - i. the organization by the Commission in Addis Ababa, from 18 to 19 November 2014, in cooperation with relevant partners, of a workshop for capacity building in the fight against trafficking in weapons of mass destruction (chemical, nuclear, biological and radiological weapons) and related materials. The workshop was attended by a number of AU Member States, including countries participating in the Nouakchott Process.
33. At their Niamey meeting, the HISS noted with satisfaction the activities carried out by the ACSRT in the field of capacity building, as well as the initiatives taken by CISSA and the UFL. They called for the pursuit of these efforts on the basis of the capacity building matrix prepared by the ACSRT, CISSA and the UFL. Within this framework, they stressed the need for the AU Member States to contribute financially to the implementation of the envisaged programmes.

## **VII. OPERATIONALISATION OF THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE AND NEXT STEPS IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE NOUAKCHOTT PROCESS**

34. The Nouakchott ministerial meeting considered the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region, in view of the inadequacy of the geographical coverage of the different existing structures and organizations. The meeting stressed the need for greater synergy between the various components of the African Standby Force (ASF), covering the North, West and Central Africa, to address the security challenges facing the Sahelo-Saharan region, particularly through closer cooperation in intelligence sharing, training, equipment and the necessary operational capacity building. At their Niamey ministerial meeting, the countries of the region reaffirmed their commitment to work towards the enhancement of the Nouakchott Process, as a framework for a common approach to the security challenges facing the region on the basis of a shared vision and collective responsibility. In this respect, and having welcomed the decisions adopted in January 2014 by the Assembly of the Union on the assessment of the ASF and on the African Capacity for

Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), they agreed on the convening of meetings of the Chiefs of Defense Staff and Ministers of Defense to consider generic concepts of operations for joint patrols and mixed units, as well as modalities for strengthening the existing cooperation structures and all other modalities of collaboration between and among the countries of the region. They also agreed to institutionalize the Nouakchott Process through the establishment of a lean secretariat in Niamey.

**a) Establishment of joint patrols and mixed units**

35. The establishment of security arrangements among the countries of the Sahel aims at translating into deeds the affirmation of the indivisibility of peace and security in the region and in Africa in general, in conformity with the Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP), adopted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Sirte, Libya, on 28 February 2004, and other relevant instruments, including the 2005 AU Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact. The Sahel continues to be classified as a high risk area, given, as pointed out above, the multifaceted security challenges facing the region, especially the activities of terrorist and armed groups, the existence of trafficking of all kinds (drugs, weapons and ammunition, human beings, etc.), difficult to control because of the length and porosity of the borders, and the prevalence of cross-border banditry manifested in the activities of highway robbers and cattle rustling.

36. In the face of these security challenges, it is imperative that the countries of the region enhance their cooperation and capacity to act. More specifically, the countries of the region could, either bilaterally or in a broader framework, initiate and plan joint actions, directed at a pre-identified target at the border or in an area within the territory of a given State or in the immediate proximity of a common boundary. Through these security arrangements, the end state for the AU and the Sahel countries would be to contribute to the establishment, within the Sahelo-Saharan region, of security conditions conducive to the harmonious development of the countries concerned. Such arrangements would also enable the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region to more effectively discharge their responsibilities towards the promotion of regional security through the pooling of their respective capabilities, in a spirit of cooperation, solidarity and integration. There are two options in terms of security arrangements between the countries of the region, in order to address the common threats they face. These are, on the one hand, the joint patrols system, and on the other, the establishment of mixed and integrated units. These enhanced operational cooperation modalities would constitute the components of a Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises in the Sahel (CIRCS).

37. The joint patrols are a form of enhanced cooperation between the countries of the region which may act jointly on an ad hoc basis or formalize their cooperation by signing bilateral or multilateral agreements. The joint patrols are operational reconnaissance, surveillance and monitoring missions jointly planned and implemented, in principle, by military units with the support of other security forces. They are conducted on both sides of the border or within the countries concerned, based on the threats posed and agreements concluded between the participating countries. The joint patrols are tasked, among other things, to collect intelligence information on terrorist activities and organized crime, monitor crossing points for people and goods at the borders, support other security

services deployed at the borders and, when required, neutralize terrorist groups and other transnational criminal entities.

38. Within the framework of the implementation of joint patrols, the countries concerned could make pledges on a bilateral or multilateral basis, and undertake patrols within their means and in light of the perceived or actual threats on the ground. These contributions may be in the form of operational units (Battalions of 700 to 850 personnel) and logistical support. The joint patrols would have a separate national command, it being understood that the countries concerned could agree on concepts for joint operations and set up a lean coordination cells. The logistical and financial support for joint patrols would be the responsibility of the countries concerned.

39. As part of the above-defined missions, the countries concerned could commit to a higher level of cooperation through the establishment of fully integrated units, considering the size of the areas to be monitored and according to modalities agreed upon by the parties. The establishment of mixed units will facilitate the pooling of resources and ensure a more effective coordination. Against this background, it is critical to ensure unity of command, compatibility in terms of communication equipment, harmonization of command procedures, planning and conduct of operations, as well as the possible integration of the logistical support. In other words, it is important to promote interoperability up to the tactical level included, which enables forces, units or systems to work together and carry out joint operations in full efficiency.

40. The mixed units could be of a minimum size of a joint battle group (1,000 to 1,500 uniformed personnel), with infantry units, Special Forces and force multipliers. Units are, in principle, multinational entities that could be integrated at all levels. They perform tasks similar to those of joint patrols and any other task entrusted to them by the countries concerned. As is the case for joint patrols, the logistical and financial support for the mixed units is borne by the contributing countries.

41. For coordination at the strategic level, it is proposed that the Chiefs of Staff of the countries of the region meet regularly to review the activities of joint patrols and mixed units. Thus the meetings of the HISS of the countries participating in the Nouakchott Process would be expanded to include representatives of the Chiefs of Staff. This framework would enable regular exchange of views on the security situation, the operations to plan and conduct, as well as on the resources to be dedicated to them. At the operational level, the countries establishing joint patrols and mixed units could set up lean Operations Coordination Cells (OCC). As regards the legal framework, countries could agree on a "Generic Memorandum of Understanding" on contributions in resources, parking fees, movement of forces and aircraft over flight and the right of hot pursuit of criminal groups and individuals across borders.

42. On the basis of the discussions that will take place in Nouakchott, the Commission intends to finalize the draft generic concepts of operations for joint patrols and mixed units at the beginning of next year, including with the support of the UN, which offered to make experts available. These concepts would then be submitted to the Chiefs of Staff and Defence Ministers for consideration and adoption. The Ministers in charge of Security and the heads of the relevant Services will also be involved in this meeting. The generic

concepts would serve as a framework for arrangements that the countries of the region could agree on to face common security threats.

**b) Other cooperation modalities**

43. It is also possible to design, on the basis of existing experiences, other models of security cooperation. These may take the form of police and customs cooperation centers, with both an information role, with the collection and exchange of intelligence, and an operational role, through support to relevant services in the conduct of cross-border actions; the secondment of liaison officers to facilitate the exchange of information on the fight against transnational crime and the execution of requests for assistance by police or customs institutions; and the establishment of bilateral or multinational radio frequencies to enable a more rapid communication.

**c) Establishment of an intervention force for northern Mali**

44. As indicated above, the ministerial meeting of the Troop Contributing Countries to MINUSMA requested the Commission to make an in-depth study on the modalities for the establishment of an intervention force for northern Mali. The Commission has already initiated that process. In the Commission's understanding, the objective of this force would be to contribute to the elimination of the threat that terrorist groups pose to security and stability in the Sahelo-Saharan region and create the necessary conditions for the successful stabilization of northern Mali, including the implementation of any future peace agreement between the Government and the northern armed movements.

45. The Commission plans to convene in Bamako, in January 2015, a meeting of experts of the countries of the region and other international actors concerned to finalize the proposals to be submitted to the PSC. Without prejudice to the recommendations of this meeting, the envisaged intervention force could be designed as a separate entity from MINUSMA, both operationally and logistically, or integrated into this Mission, like the Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The first option has the following advantages: straightforward and more effective command and control system, faster decision-making process, possibility of giving a mandate more robust than that of traditional peacekeeping operations. It also has constraints related particularly to the challenge of mobilizing the huge financial and material resources needed for the deployment and sustenance of such a force. The second option will make it possible to benefit from the financial resources made available to MINUSMA under the UN assessed contributions, as well as from the logistical resources of the Mission; it would also make it possible to ensure a greater strategic coherence in the international action to address the security challenges in northern Mali. This option also has constraints: the process to establish the intervention force may take time and requires a consensus at the level of the UN Security Council; similarly, there may also be a risk of subordination of the tasks of the intervention force to the mandate of MINUSMA if the latter is not adjusted to take into account the tasks entrusted to the intervention force.

**d) Establishment of the Nouakchott Process Secretariat**

46. At their Niamey meeting, the countries of the region agreed to institutionalize the Nouakchott Process with the establishment, under MISAHEL leadership, of a lean Secretariat, to better coordinate the implementation of the Nouakchott Process, pending its possible transformation into an Executive Secretariat linked to MISAHEL.

47. In this respect, the Commission is planning, as an initial step, to rapidly deploy an officer in Niamey who would operate from the AU Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition (CELTHO). The role of this officer would be to facilitate the monitoring of the conclusions of the different meetings organized within the framework of the Process. Similarly, steps are envisaged to enhance AU's presence in the region through the strengthening of the existing offices, notably Ndjamena and Algiers, and the establishment of new ones where so required.

**VIII. AU STRATEGY FOR THE SAHEL**

48. Under the auspices of the Commission, MISAHEL has elaborated an AU Strategy for the Sahel region, which is based on three pillars: (i) governance, (ii) security and (iii) development. The Strategy, which is accompanied by an annual Plan of Action, was validated by the 3<sup>rd</sup> ministerial meeting of the countries of the region and endorsed by the PSC at its 449<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 11 August 2014.

49. A number of other organizations, notably the UN, ECOWAS and the EU, have also adopted Strategies for the Sahel region. In order to ensure close coordination of these Strategies, a Ministerial Coordination Platform (MCP) was established during a high-level ministerial meeting in Bamako, on 5 November 2013, under the chairmanship of Mali for the next two years. A Technical Secretariat (TS) was also established to support the MCP, co-chaired by the AU and the UN, represented respectively by MISAHEL and OSES. The TS and the MCP held their fourth and third meetings in Bamako, respectively, on 16 and 18 November 2014, during which a number of practical steps were agreed upon.

**IX. OBSERVATIONS**

50. Almost twenty one months after its launch, the Nouakchott Process has made significant progress. Several meetings have been held and activities carried out, thus contributing to the enhancement of security cooperation in the region. These efforts must be pursued and intensified, with particular emphasis on the effective implementation of outstanding aspects of the conclusions of the meetings of the HISS and those of the Ministers. At the same time, the reflection initiated on the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region should be expedited and finalized, in order to move as quickly as possible to the practical phase of implementing the agreed arrangements. It is significant to point out that the PSC Summit on terrorism and violent extremism, held in Nairobi, on 2 September 2014, encouraged the establishment, in other regions of the continent, of arrangements similar to the Nouakchott Process.

51. Building on the commitment of the countries of the region to continue to work towards the enhancement of the Nouakchott Process, as reiterated by the 3<sup>rd</sup> ministerial

meeting, it is recommended that the countries participating in the Process agree to hold an annual Summit to strengthen the political ownership of the Process, consolidate the progress made and open new prospects for the cooperation that has developed between them. The regular convening of meetings at this level would also facilitate the mobilization of more sustained international support for the Nouakchott Process. In this respect, the statements of support to the Nouakchott Process made by a number of international actors, including the UN, particularly the Security Council, the EU and several bilateral partners, should be welcomed.

52. The successful conclusion of the inter-Malian peace talks in Algiers is crucial for the stabilization of northern Mali and, more generally, for the success of the Nouakchott Process. The early conclusion of a peace agreement will indeed foster the creation of conditions conducive for a more effective fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime. It is important that the Summit reaffirm the full support of the region to these peace talks and urge the parties to conclude an agreement at the resumption of the negotiations in January 2015 in Algiers, within the framework of the already agreed principles of respect for the unity and territorial integrity of Mali, as well as of the secular nature of the State.

53. Equally important for the ongoing efforts is the speedy resolution of the serious crisis facing Libya. In this regard, the Summit may wish to endorse the relevant decisions of the PSC and welcome the conclusions of the inaugural meeting of the IGC-L.

54. The Summit may wish to welcome the efforts made by the Member countries of the LCBC and Benin to neutralize the Boko Haram terrorist group and express its full support to the establishment of the MNJTF. In this regard, and as a follow up to the PSC communiqué of 25 November 2014, the Summit may wish to appeal for the mobilization of the necessary international support, including the adoption by the UN Security Council of a resolution supporting the establishment and deployment of the MNJTF.

55. The Summit may also wish to welcome the establishment of a Transition leading to the organization of free, fair and credible elections, within one year, in Burkina Faso. In this regard, the Summit may wish to encourage the Burkinabe stakeholders to persevere in their efforts, urge the international community to lend all the necessary support for the successful completion of the Transition and underscore, in this regard, the important role to be played by the International Support Group for the Transition, set up in conformity with the PSC communiqué of 18 November 2014, under the joint aegis of the AU, ECOWAS and the UN.

56. The efforts made by the AU within the framework of the Nouakchott Process are part of the overall approach that it endeavors to promote through its Strategy for the Sahel, with the support of international partners. It is worth welcoming the increased mobilization of the international community in support of the countries of the region, as evidenced by the efforts of the UN, the EU and other international actors, as well as by the increasing awareness about the need for close coordination of initiatives.