



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject : Summary record of the plenary session of the European Parliament held in Strasbourg on 15 January 2013
Statement by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the situation in Mali

The High Representative delivered the speech set out in the Annex.

For the political groups, a very large majority of speakers explicitly paid tribute to the French soldiers and agreed that the situation in Mali required the French military intervention. The political group speakers also made the following comments:

- Mr Salafranca (EPP, ES) took the view that the radicalisation of the situation was a collateral effect of the Arab Spring and argued that, if the EU was serious about its aspirations to be a global player, it had to live up to its commitments.
- Ms De Keyser (S&D, BE) contradicted Mr Salafranca by saying that the situation was not a collateral effect of the Arab Spring but the result of activities of criminal bands and terrorists who took advantage at one stage of the war in Libya. She hoped that the projected EU CSDP mission would be put in place soon and that the African Union (AU) would also be present.
- Ms De Sarnez (ALDE, FR) drew attention to the suffering of the civilian population and the risk that a terrorist state might be established. She thanked Algeria for its cooperation in the military intervention and called upon the EU to assist France and the AU at the logistical,

humanitarian and military level and to contribute financially to solutions needed for the refugees.

- Mr Cohn-Bendit (Green/EFA, FR) considered that diplomacy had failed in the past and there had been no plan B. He stressed that the EU was lacking in civilian and military capabilities, which demonstrated a European integration deficit, and he wondered if France had the appropriate means. He added that Mali was a failed state and that he had doubts about an AU intervention force. He also pointed out that past experience had shown that it was impossible to establish the rule of law through an external military intervention.
- Mr Tannock (ECR, UK) recalled the situation on the ground which, his group believed, justified the French intervention. He also thanked Algeria for its cooperation.
- Ms Lösing (GUE/NGL, DE), while recognising the dangerous situation and related risks, felt that the reasons for the intervention were not clear and reminded Members of the poverty in the country despite its natural resources. She also referred to previous examples of external military intervention which had all failed.
- Mr Gollnisch (NI, FR) noted that the EU and its allies had left France to act alone. He argued that the majority of the political groups were responsible for the situation in Mali because in the past they had supported the arming of jihad forces in Libya.

The individual statements broadly reflected the positions taken by the speakers of the political groups, with significant support for France's military intervention, which was felt to be a necessary response to the situation, and calls for greater solidarity. Many speakers criticised the fact that the EU had once again failed to react in time and was still lacking the necessary means. Mr Gahler (PPE, DE) in particular considered that the EU battle groups should be activated.

The High Representative closed the debate by saying that it had covered the complete spectrum of views. She said that what was needed was a political, developmental, strategic approach aimed at a development plan, and this was currently being drawn up in cooperation with the AU and the UN. She added that a security strategy was needed for the region. The High Representative underlined that she was acting within the existing EU framework which did not provide for a European Defence Force. She explained that deployment of the EU training mission also depended on the recipient's readiness. She stressed that the challenges ahead should not be underestimated and reported that additional humanitarian aid and development support was being prepared, as well as support for the other countries at risk in the region.

Speech delivered by the High Representative, Strasbourg 15 January 2013

Madam President, firstly I would like to thank very much President Schulz and all the political groups for the cooperation and flexibility that you have shown in making space today for this really important opportunity to update you and to discuss the situation in Mali. This is something I felt very strongly, in this very turbulent week, that I wanted to be able to do as we bring together our services and the crisis platform, and of course as we talk with the Malian Government and I convene the Foreign Affairs Council for an emergency meeting this week.

As you will have seen, the situation in Mali has dramatically changed over the last week. The jihadist rebels and terrorists from the North have become clearer in their intentions, as they have launched an offensive moving further South and taken the city of Konna in the region of Mopti – only a few hundred kilometres from the capital Bamako. It was clear to us as we analysed the situation as it happened, that they wished to seize as much territory within Mali as possible and to reinforce their position before the international community was fully ready to act. They also, of course, sought to destabilise the government in Bamako to make it even more difficult for the international community to bring its support to the Malian people.

The consequences of this are already clear from the actions that have been perpetrated in northern Mali by the radical groups. There have been horrific abuses of human rights, the desecration of holy and cultural sites, the trampling of political and religious freedom, and a threat posed to all neighbouring countries. That threat, of course, extends to the EU itself; we are directly impacted by the situation there. Terrorist groups based in northern Mali use this territory that they control for all kinds of traffic, for drugs and arms smuggling. They have taken many hostages, many of them originated from European Member States. So under no circumstances can we be indifferent to the situation.

I want to pay tribute to those Member States, particularly France, as well as the countries of West Africa, who have come to Mali's aid. It is important that the rebels understand that the international community is united in supporting the Malian people against those who wish to impose an undemocratic and violent regime on them. As the UN Security Council concluded on 10 and on 14 January 2013, the aggressive actions of the rebels 'constituted a direct threat to international peace

and security'. I have strongly condemned this aggression. What we are facing today in Mali is a matter of emergency. We have to act. A failure to do so would be a great political, strategic and humanitarian mistake.

Like other international organisations – not just the UN but the African Union and Ecowas – as well as a number of Member States, led by France and other African countries, we have responded to the appeal made by President Traoré of Mali for help. Coordination and involvement are absolutely necessary. The states of the region are playing a key role, and the decision of Algeria and Morocco to authorise the use of their air space is a good example of this international mobilisation. This will be very much a collective effort, but the EU, which has taken the lead in defining a strategy to resolve the problems of the Sahel region, has a critical role to play. I set out the EU's commitment to support the people of Mali already in a statement on 11 January 2013. But more important now is to be rapidly engaged and to act.

Since the end of last week, the External Action Service and our Commission colleagues have put together a package of measures that will provide immediate and longer-term help to the Malian Government and people. Yesterday I chaired the meeting of the EU's Crisis Platform to pull the threads together, and I spoke again to the Foreign Minister of France on the state of play on the ground. Taking all of these elements into account, as well as the urgency of the situation, I have announced an extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council which will discuss this package of actions, adopt immediate measures and which will be attended by the Foreign Minister of Mali. As I reiterated yesterday, we need to accelerate our course of action. As I have said, the Foreign Minister of Mali is on his way to Brussels to meet with me bilaterally and then to join us at the Foreign Affairs Council.

The EU has already agreed to provide a training mission. This will help the Malian Army restructure and enhance their capacity to defend their people against threats. We want to deploy that mission as quickly as possible, and certainly more quickly than we had planned. Though circumstances have changed, there is still a real need for Mali to have an efficient and professional military under civilian control. It is all the more urgent and, in the long run, will be essential for the viability and territorial integrity of that country.

So we are going to adapt accordingly the details of our mission, get the agreement from Member States when we bring them together in the Foreign Affairs Council and send, without further delay

in these next days, the first preparatory and technical elements of that mission. We have also undertaken to support those African countries providing troops for the UN-African Union mandated African-led International Support Mission to Mali. One key part of this international effort is to underline the need for a genuine African ownership of this whole initiative. I am working with Commissioner Piebalgs and the Member States to ensure that our financial support, through the African Peace Facility, can be provided in a timely manner, given that this is now being deployed more quickly than originally planned. We also have to think about logistical support, as the deployment of this African-led force is key for fighting against terrorist groups and restoring territorial integrity to Mali.

We are also looking at ways in which we can support the President and his government in putting the country back on the proper democratic and constitutional path. We have talked about the position in the Sahel and our overarching strategy, and Mali has been through a traumatic period over the last year. Two things have become very clear: firstly, that the Malian army's job is to defend the people and not to run the government; secondly, that the Malian Government has to respond to the needs of the people, helping their development and respecting their diversity. We can help with both of those.

We also have to look to the increase in our humanitarian support. We have never stopped this assistance (EUR 58 million already in 2012, and EUR 20 million immediately available). It will continue, even in what are very difficult conditions, to try to meet the growing needs of the Malian population, internally-displaced people and refugees, and women and children, who are always the first to suffer from such a crisis.

It is part of our comprehensive approach that we try to tackle the full range of issues that will help to build a more stable and prosperous future for this country. I intend to appoint an EU Special Representative for the Sahel, which will enable us to increase our capacity to deliver help to all the countries of the region, to coordinate better, to work closely with the neighbours and international organisations, and to be even more active in the necessary coordination from the international community that is going to be even more relevant now. But the survival of Mali must come first. So we need to make sure that we protect, promote and respect sovereignty, unity and the integrity of the Malian nation. That has got to be the immediate priority and the immediate action that we take.

As I began, I am extraordinarily grateful that you have allowed me to bring this to your attention. It is an issue in which I believe that the Parliament has much to offer. Furthermore, we have in place a good strategy which, having got ourselves ready for action, we are now able to engage and to move forward. I am looking forward very much to your comments.
