



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 23 March 2012

8067/12

**COAFR 87
ACP 41
PESC 393
DEVGEN 72
COTER 22
COMAG 26
COHAFA 32
RELEX 270**

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: Council Conclusions on Sahel

At its meeting on 23 March 2012, the Council adopted the Conclusions on Sahel annexed to this note.

Council Conclusions on Sahel

1. One year after the presentation of an EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel and in the context of the turbulent events in the wider region coinciding with a new food crisis, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the development of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Sahel region.
2. The Council firmly condemned attempts to seize power by force in Mali. It called for an immediate end of violence and the release of State officials, the protection of civilians, the restoration of civil, constitutional government and for the holding of democratic elections as planned. The EU will work closely with the African Union and ECOWAS. The Council invited the Commission to take precautionary measures in the implementation of EU development cooperation as the situation warrants. The Council underlined that direct support to the population will continue as well as humanitarian aid.
3. Underlining the importance of respect for the territorial integrity of Mali, the Council repeated its call for an immediate ceasefire in northern Mali and for an inclusive dialogue which the EU stands ready to support.
4. The Council expressed deep concern about the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel region. It underlined its determination to support Sahel countries, in partnership with regional organisations and other international partners, in their efforts to fight against the interlinked challenges of poverty, terrorism, violent extremism and organised crime and to address spill-over effects of the recent crisis in Libya. In this context, the Council welcomed progress over the last 12 months in the implementation of the Strategy and the coordinated use of all EU instruments in the fields of development, governance, rule of law, migration and security to support the socio-economic development of Mali, Mauritania and Niger and to strengthen their capacities to deal with the scourges of terrorism and organised crime, including the trafficking of drugs and human beings.

5. The Council encouraged the strengthening of ongoing regional cooperation to accompany national strategies to promote the stability and development of the countries concerned. In this context, the Council welcomed the increased engagement of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations in support of regionally-owned processes and stressed the need to continue close consultation with regional organisations including the AU and ECOWAS.

6. In recognition of the particular security challenges faced by the States in the region, the Council approved the Crisis Management Concept for a civilian CSDP Advisory, Assistance and Training mission in Sahel, with an operational focus in Niger, to support Gendarmerie, Police Nationale and Garde Nationale to enhance their level of interoperability and law enforcement capacity, in particular to fight terrorism and organised crime while fully respecting Rule of Law and Human Rights. It underlined the need for taking forward operational planning without delay, with a view to deploy the mission by the end of summer 2012.

7. The fragile security of the region has been further exacerbated both by a deepening food and nutrition crisis affecting 15 million people and the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in northern Mali and the resulting high numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees whose safety and access to humanitarian assistance should be ensured. The EU has provided early humanitarian assistance for an amount of 123.5 million Euros and together with Member States will continue to provide such assistance to respond to the urgent needs of the most affected populations in the Sahel countries and the wider region. To this effect, an additional amount of 9 million Euros is being mobilised to provide emergency assistance to people affected by the conflict in northern Mali.

8. National ownership, regional solidarity, flexible funding, donor coordination and strengthened dialogue between humanitarian and development actors are essential to overcome the long-standing chronic food and malnutrition problems in the region and to build resilience. Building on national initiatives the EU is committed to stepping up its support to the countries in the region in their efforts to avert this type of crisis in the future and to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security. In this context, the EU plans to allocate an additional 164.5 million Euros to reinforce and complement existing development actions on food security in the region.

9. The Council invited the High Representative and the European Commission to accelerate implementation of the Sahel Strategy and to report regularly on progress.
