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**8TH MEETING OF THE HEADS OF INTELLIGENCE
AND SECURITY SERVICES OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE
SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION**

**GRAND BASSAM, COTE D'IVOIRE
14-15 NOVEMBER 2016**

OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

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1. The 8th Meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services (HISS) of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region was held in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, on 14 and 15 November 2016, within the framework of the Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan Region. The following countries participated in the meeting: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. In addition to the Commission of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the AU Mission to Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), the African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Fusion and Liaison Unit for the Sahel (UFL), the Permanent Secretariat of the Group of Five of the Sahel – G5 Sahel – and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) also participated in the meeting.
2. The highlights at opening ceremony included a goodwill message from the Minister of African Integration and Ivorians Abroad, of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Ally Coulibaly, and opening remarks by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, as well as a welcome address by the Representative of the Mayor of Grand Bassam.
3. The opening ceremony was followed by the laying of wreath in remembrance of the victims of the terrorist attacks of 13 March 2016.

I. ON THE OVERALL SITUATION IN THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION

4. Participants reviewed the overall situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region since the 7th meeting, starting with a presentation by the AU High Representative for Mali and The Sahel, former President Pierre Buyoya, followed by contributions from CAERT, UFL and MINUSMA, as well member-countries. The interactive session underscored the continued threats to regional peace and security, particularly violent attacks and illegal activities of terrorist and criminal armed groups operating in the region, which have contributed to the increase of socio-economic challenges that need to be addressed.
5. Participants, in this regard, reiterated their deep concern about some developments that took place in the already fragile security situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region. Regarding the situation in Mali, they noted the persistence and multiplication of terrorist attacks in the northern part of the country, notably targeting the civilians, the Malian Defence and Security Forces barracks and MINUSMA convoys, as well as members of the French Barkhane Operation. They equally noted with serious concern the continuous expansions of the terrorist attacks towards the central parts of Mali, particularly near the Niger Bend.
6. Participants welcomed the measures taken for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, as a result of the Algiers Process, signed in Bamako, on 15 May and 20 June 2015 by the Government of Mali and the Movements. In this regard, they welcomed the institutional and legislative measures taken by the Government of Mali for the establishment of local Interim Administrations, as well as the arrangements for cantonment, initiated by the Parties, with the support of MINUSMA. They reaffirmed that

the effective implementation of the Agreement, in good faith, with the support of the countries of the Region and the rest of the international community, will contribute to the search of a lasting solution to the recurrent crises in Mali, while at the same time contributing to further isolation of the terrorist and criminal groups operating in the Region.

7. Participants, once again, commended the sacrifices made by the Defence and Security Forces of Mali, MINUSMA and the Barkhane Operation, targets of repeated attacks by the terrorist groups operating in Mali. They welcomed the adoption by the UN Security Council of Resolution 2295(2016), which gave the Mission a more robust posture to address the current threats.

8. Participants expressed deep concern at the spread of the terrorist attacks towards those parts of the region, which had been hitherto spared. In this regard, they strongly condemned the attacks perpetrated in Ouagadougou, in January 2016, and in Grand Bassam, in March 2016. They welcomed the vigorous and rapid reaction of the countries of the region, as well as the preventive measures taken following the violent attacks, especially those relating to the reinforcement of security cooperation.

9. Participants expressed their concern over the prevalent precarious humanitarian and security situation, as well as the stalemate in the political process in Libya. They recalled the negative impact of the persistent crisis in that country, which, combined with other factors, has impacted negatively on regional peace and stability, particularly the expansion of terrorism and transnational organised crime in the Sahelo-Saharan region. In this regard, they welcomed the efforts of the AU in its continuous initiatives for peace and reconciliation in Libya, noting the important decisions of the meeting of the AU High-Level Committee on Libya, held on 8 November 2016, especially those relating to reinforcement of international cooperation and coordination in order to find a lasting solution to the situation in that country.

10. Participants commended the significant progress made in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist group, thanks to the individual and collective efforts made by the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin. They noted that this cooperation has significantly reduced the areas of action and operational capabilities of Boko Haram. They expressed their appreciation to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and reiterated their strong condemnation of the group's attacks against civilians, including refugees and the Defence and Security Forces of the countries in the region.

11. Participants welcomed the normalization process in Burkina Faso, following the presidential, legislative and local elections, held in December 2015 and May 2016, respectively, and the establishment of the new authorities. They stressed the need for continued economic and financial support from the international community for the consolidation of the democratic process in Burkina Faso.

12. Participants also exchanged views on other potential sources of threats to peace, security and stability in the Sahelo-Saharan region. In this regard, they reiterated their deep concern about the persistence and intensification of drug and human trafficking, including migrants, as well as other activities linked to transnational organized crime, in collusion with terrorist networks in the Region.

II. STATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALGIERS OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

13. Participants reviewed the state of implementation of the Operational Conclusions of the Algiers meeting and in particular :

i. Participants took note of the presentations made by the ACSRT and the UFL on the preliminary conclusions of their study on the impact of the action of the Islamic State terrorist group on the configuration and evolution of terrorist groups in the Sahelo-Saharan region. They stressed the need to strengthen the monitoring and preventive measures to contain the recruitment and action of the combatants, nationals of the neighboring countries of Libya.

ii. Participants took note of the effective use of the UFL Secured Communication System by member-services, including other member-services of the Nouakchott Process, which have been connected to the system.

iii. Participants followed with interest the presentation made by the National Intelligence Coordinator of Cote d'Ivoire on illegal gold mining which noted that this activity has the potential of posing a threat to peace and security to countries of the Region, particularly when carried out in linkage to terrorist threats.

iv. Participants welcomed the activities carried out by the ACSRT and MISAHEL within the framework of the efforts in the fight against radicalization and violent extremism, through the organization of a Symposium held from 11 to 13 October 2016 in Bamako, and looked forward to the next one scheduled to be held in Niamey, from the 8th to 10th December 2016.

III. MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION OF THE SUMMIT OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE NOUAKCHOTT PROCESS OF 18 DECEMBER 2014

14. Participants welcomed the convening of the first meeting of the Chiefs of Defence Staff and Defence Ministers held in Bamako, from 2 to 4 September 2015. They noted with satisfaction the Conclusions of that meeting, particularly with regard to Joint Patrols and Mixed Units, as well as the establishment of the Intervention Force. Participants also took note of the presentation by the Commission on the Report of the Joint Technical Assessment Mission comprising the member-countries of the Nouakchott Process, ECOWAS and the United Nations, in addition to the AU, which was dispatched to Mali, from 22 July to 3 August 2016, as a follow-up to the Initial Mission of March/April 2016. They encouraged the Commission, in liaison with the Member-States of the Process, to finalize the Concept of Operations for the Force on the basis of the detailed report of the threats which the Force is meant to confront. They took note of the ongoing consultation on the convening of a joint meeting of Defence and Foreign Ministers to present the Conclusions and other relevant documents on the issue before submission to the Peace and Security Council for further necessary decisions and forwarding to the UN Security Council.

15. Participants stressed the importance of regional initiatives in the efforts to promote peace and security, particularly with regard to the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime. They welcomed, in this respect, the actions taken by the member-countries

of the G5 Sahel Group to enhance security cooperation. Furthermore, they stressed the need for continuous efforts aimed at enhancing coordination of the initiatives for greater effectiveness and also harmonizing action towards the common objective of promoting peace, security, stability and development in the Sahelo-Saharan Region.

IV. POINTS FOR ACTION

16. Participants agreed on the following courses of action:

- i. Strengthening of institutional capacity of Focal Points of Member-States in order to ensure better and more effective working relations with the ACSRT ;
- ii. Focal Points of Member-States to make use of the secure communication networks of UFL and CISSA for communication and exchanges with ACSRT. Plans to be concluded soon to enable secured access to the data base and analyses of the ACSRT ;
- iii. Reinforcement of security and protection for internally displaced persons and refugees in camps, so as to prevent infiltration by terrorist and criminal groups ;
- iv. Further in-depth analysis of the impact of illegal gold mining activities on the security of Member-States and in particular, identify practical legislative measures that will help in preventing the exploitation of these activities by terrorist and criminal networks ;
- v. Consideration by countries in the Region of the need to adopt innovative measures to strengthen the peaceful coexistence between herdsmen and other communities, especially by promoting better control of the free flow and movement of persons and the fight against cattle rustling ;
- vi. The ACSRT, in conjunction with Member-States to conduct a study on the Community Self-Defence Groups operating in respective Member-Countries.

V. APPRECIATION AND NEXT MEETING

17. Participants expressed their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for the welcome and hospitality extended to all the delegates and for the excellent arrangements made for the smooth running of the meeting.

18. Participants agreed to convene their 9th meeting in February 2017. The exact date and venue will be communicated after due consultations.

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