



Committee: United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Topic: The situation in the Sahel region

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I. Committee Background

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the main organs of the United Nations (UN) system. It was created in 1945 and is based at the UN Headquarters in New York City. The first session of the UNSC was held on January 17th, 1946, with the task of promoting and maintaining international peace and security. The committee consists of five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) and ten rotating non-permanent members who are elected every two years by the UN General Assembly. The permanent members count with a special power called a “veto”. The veto enables them to dismiss any substantive resolution (What is the Security Council?, UN, 2020). The UNSC is the only organ within the UN that can issue binding resolutions. Moreover, it can establish peacekeeping operations and issue international sanctions (Functions and Powers, UN, 2020).

II. Topic Information

A) History of the Topic

The Sahel, a western north-central African region, stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea (Chepkemoi, World Atlas, 2017). The Sahel region covers

southern Mauritania, Cameroon, northern Senegal, the Niger River in Mali, southern Niger, Burkina Faso, northeastern Nigeria, south-central Chad, Gambia, Guinea, and Sudan (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). According to the World Atlas, “the Sahel is a biogeographic and ecoclimatic zone of transition between the Sahara Desert ecoregion to the north and the Sudanian Savanna to the south.” In different terms, it is the separation point between two of the most significant geographical zones of the globe (Chepkemoi, World Atlas, 2017). Moreover, the news website The Conversation has called the region a shoreline between Sub Saharan Africa and the Middle East. The shoreline acts as an interaction point between Islamic and nomadic cultures from the north, and Arabic and indigenous and traditional cultures from the south (Suleiman, The Conversation, 2017).

The Sahel region is currently facing numerous challenges such as extreme famine, land degradation, rising temperatures, corrupt governance and terrorism (Suleiman, The Conversation, 2017). Over the past decade, the Sahel region has experienced rising temperatures which have caused land degradation and drought. As a result, there has been a sharp decrease in fertile farmlands in order to grow enough food to support the population. Food insecurity and famine have forced large portions of the population to migrate elsewhere or rely on humanitarian aid. In connection, the effects of climate change have caused intercommunal violence. Farmers, nomadic and herders have begun to fight each other for access to natural resources further exacerbating the problem (Muggah, World Economic Forum, 2019). Furthermore, corrupt and ineffective governments have meant that little action has been taken to address the issue or promote development. A lack of leadership has in turn also enabled rebel and religious terrorist groups to form such as Boko Haram and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. These groups participate in attacks on farms,

schools and government installations. They also commit human rights abuses such as child abduction, rape and human trafficking (Suleiman, The Conversation, 2017). According to the United Nations, the situation in the Sahel region has caused over one million people to seek refuge in surrounding nations such as Algeria, Egypt and Libya. Furthermore, tens of thousands of others have become internally displaced within the Sahel region and rely almost exclusively on external organizations such as the African Union and the UN for humanitarian aid and security (Africa's Sahel, UN News, 2020).

In order to address the magnitude of problems impacting the Sahel region, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger joined together to form the G5 Sahel. This group has the aim of coordinating regional cooperation in development policies and security matters. Besides working on economic and development issues, the group is also focused on combating terrorism within the region. In August 2014, the group launched Operation Barkhane, an on-going counterterrorism operation that operates across sovereign borders and promotes information and intelligence sharing (Dewast, BBC News, 2020). The group has received international backing and support from the UN and countries such as France, the United Kingdom and the United States. In fact, France has become a long-term partner of the organization, sending a permanent force to operate alongside the G5 Sahel's soldiers. It has also dedicated millions of euros to the training of local soldiers and the purchasing of military equipment (France Diplomatie, 2019).

B) Current Issues

France: France first intervened in the Sahel region in 2012 and has continued to throughout the years. Much of the country's assistance has consisted of sending military support to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. In fact, France

has deployed 4,500 French soldiers to the Sahel region and has trained 8,700 local soldiers. It has also donated 14 million euros worth of equipment to the Sahel G5 organization (France Diplomatie, 2019). In January 2020, France, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger held a special conference in order to discuss military operations against Islamist militants operating in the Sahel region. Moreover, France is currently leading a campaign in order to persuade other European countries to send funds and troops to the Sahel region in order to stop the violence and address key areas such as employment, healthcare and education (Dewast, BBC News, 2020).

Nigeria: Over the past decade, the north-east of Nigeria has been plagued by a series of draughts that have caused food insecurity for around 2.9 million people. This crisis has been further compounded by violence committed by the Islamic terrorist organization Boko Haram. The group has carried out multiple attacks on villages and government installations in the region, forcing around 1.7 million people from their homes. An estimated 55 percent of the people that have been displaced are children (UNOCHA, 2017). In 2015, the Nigerian government launched a military offensive against Boko Haram. However, very little has been gained and terrorist attacks continue to take place. Lately, the attacks have targeted farmers, markets and refugee camps, making it nearly impossible to grow food and sell essential items in order to alleviate the food crisis in the region (Nigeria, FAO, 2020).

United Kingdom: Since 2018, the United Kingdom (UK) has been helping countries in the Sahel region “prepare for, respond to, and mitigate humanitarian and climate shocks by delivering humanitarian aid and supporting better forecasting of when crises may take place.” The country has dedicated itself to investing in the agricultural sector in the Sahel region by providing specialized training, machines and seeds. It has also provided 2.5 million people with humanitarian aid in order to combat food

insecurity and a lack of access to clean drinking water. Moreover, in January 2018, the UK became a member of the Sahel Alliance which has the objective to improve the “coordination, quality and impact of development investment in the Sahel” (DFID, 2018).

United States: Since 2015, the United States (US) has provided the G5 Sahel group with military support in order to combat terrorist groups operating in the Sahel region. The country has sent its soldiers to Cameroon and Nigeria in order to provide intelligence support and conduct reconnaissance flights. Furthermore, the US has provided local soldiers from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger with training in counterterrorism. In 2017, the US pledged to provide the G5 Sahel Joint Force’s counterterrorism unit with US\$60 million over a ten year period. The money will be used to help “regional partners in their fight to ensure security and stability in the face of ISIS and affiliated groups and other terrorist networks” (Arieff, Congressional Research Service, 2019).

C) UN Action

In order to address this issue, in 2017 the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution 2391 which established the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS). This framework is focused on strengthening and improving three areas: inclusive and effective governance, regional security, and humanitarian and development aid. Initiatives related to the UNISS are overseen by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) (UNOWAS, 2020). Furthermore, in 2018, the United Nations established the UN Support Plan for the Sahel. Its goal is to “scale up efforts to accelerate shared prosperity and lasting peace in the Sahel countries and the region at-large by implementing priorities to achieve the 2030

Agenda for sustainable development and the African Union Agenda 2063” (UN Support Plan, ReliefWeb, 2018). In addition, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) created the Sahel Programme in order to support “the development of accessible, efficient and accountable criminal justice systems to combat illicit trafficking drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism and corruption” (UNODC, 2017).

II. Essential Questions

1. Where is the Sahel region?
2. What types of crises are happening in the Sahel region? What factors contributed to these crises?
3. Is your country providing aid to the Sahel region? If so, in which way?
4. What is the United Nations doing to address this issue?
5. Which other organizations are working on this issue? Is your country collaborating with any of them? If so, which ones and how?
6. How has climate change contributed to the situation in the Sahel region?
7. What is the G5 Sahel? How has it helped the region? What challenges does it currently face?

IV. Quorum

- Afghanistan
- Brazil
- Canada
- China

- Egypt
- France
- Germany
- India
- Iran
- Israel
- Japan
- Kenya
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- South Africa
- South Korea
- Syria
- Turkey
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States

V. Resources

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