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Delegations will find attached the Holistic Strategic Review of EUTM Mali and EUCAP SAHEL Mali 2022.

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Integrated Strategic Planning for CSDP and Stabilisation (ISP)

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Holistic Strategic Review of EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali 2022

REFERENCES

I – Political framework

- A. Joint Communication on “Elements for an EU-wide strategic framework to support security sector reform” dated 05 July 2016 (JOIN(2016) 31)
- B. Council conclusions on EU-wide strategic framework to support Security Sector Reform (SSR) adopted on 14 November 2016 (ST 13998/16)
- C. Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflict and Crises adopted on 22 January 2018 (ST 5413/18)
- D. Council Conclusions on the European Union’s Integrated Strategy in the Sahel adopted on 16 April 2021 (ST 7723/21)
- E. A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence dated 21 March 2022 (ST 7371/22)

II – Strategic framework

- F. Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP military mission in Mali dated 05 December 2012
- G. Crisis Management Concept for a possible PSDC support to the Internal Security Forces in Mali on 28 January 2014 (ST 5836/14)
- H. Regionalisation of the CSDP Missions in Sahel – Strategic concept dated 20 September 2016 (ST 12391/16)
- I. Military Advice on the Strategic concept for the Regionalisation of the CSDP Missions in Sahel dated 27 October 2016 (ST 13782/16)
- J. Joint CivCom Advice and PMG Recommendations on the Strategic Concept for the Regionalisation of the CSDP Missions in Sahel dated 9 November 2016 (ST 14130/16)
- K. EUTM Mali – Strategic Review dated 13 December 2019 (ST 15073/19)
- L. Military Advice on Strategic Review EUTM Mali dated 10 February 2020 (ST 5954/20)
- M. PMG Recommendations on the Strategic Review of the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) dated 11 February 2020 (ST 5968/20)
- N. Council decision (CFSP) 2020/434 amending Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali) dated 23 March 2020
- O. EUCAP Sahel Mali and RACC Strategic Review dated 7 October 2020 (ST 11589/20)
- P. Projet d’Avis et Recommandations conjoints du CivCom et du GPM sur la Revue Stratégique d’EUCAP Sahel Mali et de la CCCR/RACC dated 30 Octobre 2020 (ST 12486/20)
- Q. Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/14 amending Decision 2014/219/CFSP on the European Union CSDP Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) dated 7 January 2021
- R. Scénarios possibles pour les missions PSDC au Sahel dans le contexte de la crise malienne dated 28 February 2022 (ST 6688/22)

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- S. PMG recommendations on the possible scenarios for the CSDP missions in the Sahel in the light of the Malian crisis dated 14 March 2022 (ST 7190/22)
- T. Military Advice on the possible scenarios for the CSDP missions in the Sahel in the context of the crisis in Mali dated 15 March 2022 (ST 7211/22)
- U. Concept for enhancing EU Military Missions' effectiveness dated 9 March 2022 (ST 6999/22)

III – Operational framework

- V. Plan de Mise en Œuvre Régional PSDC (RIP - Regional Implementation Plan) dated 12 July 2018 (ST 11095/18)
- W. Military Advice on the CSDP Regional Implementation Plan dated 20 September 2018 (ST 12373/18)
- X. Joint CivCom Advice and PMG Recommendations on the Regional Implementation Plan (RIP) for CSDP in Sahel dated 15 October 2018 (ST 13128/18)
- Y. Joint staff working document on "Integrated support to EU security and defence engagement for the stabilisation in the Sahel" on 1 July 2019 (ST 10829/19)
- Z. Action Plan – EU Security and Defence Integrated Engagement for the Stabilisation in the Sahel dated 11 October 2019 (ST 13004/19)
- AA. Military Advice on EU Action Plan for the Sahel dated 4 November 2019 (ST 13742/19)
- BB. Joint CivCom Advice and PMG Recommendations on the Action Plan - EU Security and Defence Integrated Engagement for the Stabilisation in the Sahel dated 5 November 2019 (ST 13759/19)

IV – INTCEN reports

- CC. EEAS (INTCEN) Report n°10143 dated 11 March 2022
- DD. EEAS (INTCEN) Report n°00384 dated 25 March 2022
- EE. EEAS (INTCEN) Report n°10228 dated 10 April 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The political and security situation in Mali continues to degrade. The last months have been characterized by the confrontational stance of the Malian authorities towards the international community and some of their partners as well as unprecedented level of violence in the East and the Centre of the country, despite the claimed success of the Malian armed forces' counter-offensive, supported by Russia-affiliated forces mercenaries. Serious allegations of violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law were reported, committed by terrorist armed groups as well as Malian armed forces accompanied by Russia-affiliated forces.

In this context, EU Member States decided in PSC on 05 April 2022 to temporarily suspend the provision of operational training to formed units of the Malian armed forces and National Guard, as a reversible measure in order to prevent any reputational risk due to Malian defence and security forces trained by the EU falling under the control or engaging along of Russia-affiliated forces, as it had been observed in the Centre of the country.

The EU is engaged in Mali with the entire toolbox that the Integrated Approach offers. Focus of Malian authorities, however, has shifted to the support being provided by Russia and Russia-affiliated forces, particularly in the security domain. Therefore, the security environment in Mali is being modified with the on-going withdrawal of operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba, which were the main providers of security in the North and the East. The ability of MINUSMA to fulfil its mandate, which includes protection of civilian, under such circumstances needs to be assessed. If there is no significant change to the current situation and actions of Malian armed forces and Russia-affiliated forces, their engagement will provide further momentum to the downward spiral, in terms of stability, security, coherence of society, and further degrades humanitarian and economic situations with medium to long-term effects. At the regional level, Mali decided unilaterally to withdraw from the G5 Sahel, including its Joint Force on 15 May 2022.

The possibilities for future cooperation with Malian authorities and defence and security forces will depend on two major factors to be under continued assessment: First, whether the Malian authorities are willing to cooperate with EU CSDP Missions and are demonstrating the necessary commitment in their actions. Second, some preconditions should be met before any further operational training of Malian armed forces, National Guard and Gendarmerie to avoid any reputational risk and preserve the credibility of the EU: free and entire functioning of the CSDP Missions according to their SOMAs, absence of any interference of Russia-affiliated forces with the trained units and the existence of mechanisms to prevent Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law violations.

In order not to create a vacuum which could be exploited to the detriment of EU's interests, the CSDP presence in Mali should be maintained. The main effort of CSDP Missions should nevertheless be refocussed on the provision of strategic advice and education, while maintaining the necessary capacity

to conduct contingency planning for a possible resumption of training activities, if so decided by Member States.

The security situation in the Central Sahel is severely affected by the developments in Mali. In Niger, President Bazoum has launched important reforms to double the strength of the defence and security forces by 2025. Niger armed forces need increased logistic capacities to ensure a proper life cycle for the equipment they use. They may also need additional operational support. In Burkina Faso, it is assessed that the Transition authorities will not succeed in reversing the deterioration of the situation on their own; they are seeking for international assistance. Without actions to support the operational commitment of the forces in the North, coupled with medium-term capability development, the security situation can only deteriorate. Taking into account the lessons learnt from the current EUTM regional approach, the establishment of permanent military CSDP activities in Niger, and in Burkina Faso when political conditions allow, would facilitate the provision of support to these countries.

The establishment of these new military CSDP actions, designed using the models described in the concept for enhancing EU military missions' effectiveness, would create a defence cooperation framework between the EU and the host nation. It must be flexible enough to be usable to cover additional needs. It should allow for the integration of bilateral efforts under the European flag; it could also encompass a 'train, equip and accompany' approach, with a dedicated Task Force (train and accompany up to combat) in conjunction with an assistance measure under the EPF, if requested. An option for such an ambitious approach could be to establish a military CSDP action for the training (under Article 42 TUE), while entrusting a group of Member States (under Article 44 TUE) with the accompaniment of Nigerien troops up to combat if both Nigerien and Member States agree.

To prevent the growing spillover of instability towards the Gulf of Guinea, there is a need to support the development of the defence and security capacities of the countries of the Southern Sahel-Saharan strip to fight terrorism. As a first step, and pending thorough discussions with the partners, a limited military footprint in one identified coastal state complemented with on call trainers would allow for a quick training or advice delivery while allowing to build bespoke solutions for specific request. It could then be complemented with a civilian component if needed.

It is recommended **for both Missions**:

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- To temporally and reversibly suspend all operational training activities benefiting to the MAF, National Guard and National Gendarmerie. Maintain the necessary capacity to conduct contingency planning for a redeployment and reestablishment of operational training activities, if so agreed by PSC.
- To further monitor and assess the respect for international standards with regard to Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law by MDSF during their operations, as well as the judicial follow up of violations already reported to the Malian government by MINUSMA, as much as possible within the framework of the current political scenario and limitations.
- To monitor and assess the extension of Russia and Russia-affiliated forces involvement with MDSF as well as their presence in the MDSF training establishments and associated infrastructures;
- To monitor the Russia-backed disinformation campaign and to enhance the Missions' strategic communication efforts, especially vis-à-vis the local population and international media, in particular to expose and denounce Russia-affiliated forces' behaviour and to counter disinformation, foster EU values and promote EU action, in line with an overarching EEAS strategic communication campaign;
- To continue to mainstream International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, into all their activities. Protection of Civilians affected by armed conflicts (PoC), gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, as well as the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda are matters that should be systematically addressed in all activities, as well as the respect for the principle of Rule of Law, the preservation of cultural heritage and climate sensitivity;
- To increase their coordination, including with the EU Delegation and relevant international partners, especially MINUSMA, on all of these aspects with a view to promoting civilian-military cooperation.

Main recommendations **for EUTM Mali** (detailed in chapter XI):

- To maintain the current duration of EUTM Mali mandate (until 23 May 2024)

- Regarding the support to the Malian Armed Forces (first strategic objective), to focus the Mission on the provision of strategic advice and education: (i) provide strategic advice to Mali’s Ministry of Defence and General Staff to improve their functioning in all relevant domains (ii) participate to the education of NCO and officers in specific domains (iii) provide training to the MAF only in non-operational domains, including Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, protection of civilian, gender equality and child protection.
- Regarding the support to the G5 Sahel (second strategic objective), to focus the mission on the G5 Sahel Joint Force pending on its future: (i) continue to support and advise the PCIAT in Bamako; (ii) support the pre-deployment training of the PCIAT and the sector headquarters; (iii) if dedicated CSDP actions are established in Niger and Burkina Faso, hand over activities in these countries and focus on ensuring appropriate liaison on G5 Sahel JF related issues.
- Adapt the structure of the mission accordingly.

Main recommendations **for EUCAP Sahel Mali** (detailed one in chapter XI):

- Extend the mandate of EUCAP Sahel Mali for two years (including the RACC)
- Maintain EUCAP Sahel Mali’s mandate, while modifying its fourth strategic objective which should become: “facilitating the redeployment of the ISF to the Centre and their deployment to the South of Mali”. Temporarily suspend the facilitation of the redeployment of the ISF to the Centre until PSC decides otherwise.
- As regards the National Guard, focus on activities contributing to a better governance of the forces.
- As regards the National Gendarmerie, (i) focus on activities contributing to a better governance of the forces; (ii) continue to further develop accountability mechanisms and activities in the field of fighting impunity and of human rights awareness; (iii) keep the train the trainer approach and accompaniment in the field of specialised training on investigation topics.
- As regard the National Police strengthen the mission activities: (i) enhance its capacities to strengthen the regional security; (ii) keep the train the trainer approach and accompaniment in the field of specialised training on investigation topics
- Adapt the structure of the mission accordingly

It is recommended **for Niger** to develop a Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP military mission in Niger, which will define the regional military CSDP architecture.

It is recommended **for Burkina Faso** to continue exploring possible areas of cooperation with the Burkinabe military authorities through a permanent EUTM Mali presence with a view to developing a Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP military mission in Burkina Faso, once conditions are met.

It is recommended **for the Gulf of Guinea** to further develop the recommended blueprint for a CSDP engagement in the Gulf of Guinea with a view to developing a Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP action in the Gulf of Guinea.

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The Holistic Strategic Review (HSR) of EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali provides an assessment of the Missions' achievements against their political, strategic and operational objectives and tasks defined in the Crisis Management Concept (CMC) in the framework of the international community's activities and the EU integrated approach in Mali and in the Sahel. It takes into account and builds upon the Strategic Reviews of 2020 and their related recommendations and advice, and identifies opportunities for continued engagement.
2. This HSR has been developed by the EEAS in consultation with relevant EU Commission services, EUSR team, the Malian authorities, EU Member States, including through a food-for-thought paper, and partners. It has been informed by an ISP-led fact-finding mission which took place in Mali in April 2022, as well as two ISP exploratory missions, one in Burkina Faso in December 2021 and one in Niger in February 2022. A discussion with several Malian and international civil society organizations was facilitated by EPLO on 29 March 2022.
3. This HSR covers three intertwined issues, as requested by the Political and Security Committee (PSC): it recommends the future stance of the two CSDP missions in Mali, develops options and assesses their implications for the future of the regional CSDP military engagement in the Sahel with a specific focus on Niger and Burkina Faso, and explores the possibilities for a tailored CSDP support as part of the EU Integrated Approach for cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea.
4. This HSR will be followed by the Strategic Review of EUCAP Sahel Niger in the second half of June, and the Strategic Review for the Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC) in autumn. A two month mandate extension for EUCAP Sahel Niger will be requested for this purpose.

II. SITUATION - GENERAL CONTEXT

a) Political situation

5. The political environment in Mali has been shaped by two coups (August 2020 and May 2021), the ongoing discussions between the Malian government and ECOWAS on the electoral calendar that would lead to the progressive lifting of sanctions, and the decision of the Transition authorities to reinforce their cooperation with Russia and Russia-affiliated forces.
6. The absence of an agreed electoral calendar and of a consensus on the objectives of the transition period, which could demonstrate the willingness of the current authorities to cling to power, led to an open confrontation with ECOWAS. The regional organization adopted individual sanctions in November 2021, and the economic and financial sanctions in January 2022. These sanctions have had an important impact on the economic situation and their continuation is increasingly seen as a risk to the stability of the country and of the Transitional Government. In this environment, the EU has adopted restrictive measures against five individuals in February 2021. The hearing of the prime minister at the *Conseil National de la Transition* (CNT) on 21 April highlighted a certain disenchantment with the government's track record and its trend towards populism and nationalism.
7. The decision to call upon Russia and Russia-affiliated forces to support the Malian Armed Forces (MAF), for which negotiations started during the summer 2021, led to a contest with the traditional as well as regional partners of Mali. It resulted in the joint decision of European partners to withdraw Barkhane and Takuba from Mali on 16 February 2022, following several provocations by the Malian authorities (expulsion of the Danish contingent of Takuba and expulsion of the French ambassador *inter alia*). The EU also decided to temporarily and reversibly suspend part of its support to the Malian defence and security forces on 05 April 2022. The culminating declaration of this series of events occurred on 02 May 2022, when the Malian authorities denounced unilaterally their agreement for cooperation in the field of defence with France and the status of force agreement (SOFA) for Operation Barkhane and its additional protocol on Task Force Takuba. At the regional level, Mali decided unilaterally to withdraw from the G5 Sahel, including its Joint Force on 15 May

2022, as some other members of the G5 objected to a Malian presidency due to the political situation.

b) *Security Situation*

8. The political developments in Mali outlined above led to a visible adjustment in the security situation. MAF turned from a previously reactive posture to an offensive stance. The military operation Kélétingui launched by the MAF in December 2021 resulted in a number of weeks of calm, but the highly publicized first “successes” in regaining control over the territory are now more mixed. Terrorist armed groups have reorganised and have now resumed attacks against the MAF.
9. In the North, fighting is taking place between the various armed groups and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) as a result of diminished pressure from Barkhane and Takuba. A military alliance between some signatory movements, whose relationship with the government is strained, could be set up to combat ISSP. The threat of deployment of Russia-affiliated forces in the area or a show of force by the army in the north could be the spark leading to the resumption of hostilities and the end of an already weakened peace agreement.
10. In the Centre, MAF launched search operations, together with Russia-affiliated forces. Their method to retake control of the territory includes terrorizing the population with punitive raids, targeting the Fulani community in particular. Reports of violence on civilians have reached unprecedented levels, vast majority of victims being civilians. It is evident that Russia-affiliated forces’ presence alongside the MAF coincides with serious and systematic human rights violations.
11. Access to the investigation venues is made difficult for MINUSMA, which has not yet published preliminary reports on the most recent incidents, despite pressure from many partners. The government remains in a defensive and confrontational position over these potential abuses, fostering tensions between communities and also increasing the risk of an increase in the ranks of terrorist armed groups.
12. This new paradigm is already displaying its limits. The attack against the Malian camp in Mondoro in March 2022 and the three synchronized attacks against garrisons in April 2022 shows that around 1,000 Russia-affiliated forces along with the MAF are not enough to clear and hold the centre of the country. The sustainability of the Russian support to Mali in the current global environment is also questionable.

c) *Humanitarian Situation*

13. The humanitarian situation in Mali remains critical with more than 7.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. The spread of the conflict in the northern, central and southern regions of the country, as well as in the cross-border areas of Burkina Faso and Niger, the increase in conflict-related violence, population displacement, the basic commodities price inflation, the socio-economic situation, and climate change are all accelerating the deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The number of internally displaced persons continues to increase. In addition, the food situation is deteriorating further and in 2022, the number of people in food insecurity could reach 6 million, including 1.8 million in need of emergency food assistance. The situation of protection of civilian populations is very worrying with an increase in protection incidents observed in early 2022. Finally, 20% of Malian schools are closed due to insecurity (1691 schools) and 4% of health facilities are non-functional (or partially functional).
14. Beyond the health aspect, the COVID 19 pandemic has aggravated the social and governance crisis: unpopular government responses, coupled with structural deficiencies in the provision of care, have put the economy – largely informal – under pressure. The inflation resulting from the war in Ukraine is putting an additional strain on the population.

d) *Human Rights Situation*

15. The situation of human rights remains dire in Mali. Widespread impunity prevails, with a general lack of accountability. The population is at the mercy of various state and non-state armed actors unable to provide protection and security. Recurring allegations of serious human rights and international humanitarian law violations attributed to terrorist groups, signatory armed groups, self-defence militias and state security and defence forces, limit the efforts to prevent radicalisation and address security challenges. In 2021, MINUSMA documented over 1800 cases of human rights violations and abuses with almost 600 civilians killed. The epicentre of violence continues to be in the Centre of Mali and non-state armed and terrorist groups commit the majority of atrocities but abuses and violations by defence and security forces are on the rise since the beginning of the year with 776 violations identified by MINUSMA with 326 attributed to defence and security forces. The violations

committed by state security forces visibly undermine governments' efforts to win the population's hearts and minds.

16. In the North and the Centre of the country, non-state armed groups and terrorist groups continue to impose their laws and terror on the populations, seriously affecting the civil rights and freedom of women and girls. This dimension of the conflict fuels revenge and triggers ethnically motivated clashes, as well as paving the way for popular support to radical armed groups.
17. The Malian Government has publicly committed to improve the human rights situation and to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses against civilians in the context of counter-terrorist operations. Yet, despite this commitment, progress is slow, in particular concerning the investigation and prosecution of violations attributed to state security forces. In addition, the overall judicial system in Mali is facing numerous challenges including corporatism, staffing, infrastructure and integrity. Judicial investigations – when opened – are slow, opaque and they have not led to prosecutions.

e) Disinformation

18. The information environment in the Sahel region, characterized by limited access to poorly resourced media, is conducive to the circulation and evolution of rumours and disinformation. The majority of the population relies on radio and word-of-mouth sources. The tightening of the authorities' control on the media, especially visible in Mali with the ban of French media (RFI and France 24) on 27 March, is reducing the quantity of credible content in the information space.
19. In this context, a sizeable-scale information manipulation activity has been taking place in the Malian digital environment for several months. The likely intent of these activities is to foster a strong anti-French sentiment, and more broadly anti-Western hostility, and undermine the international (military) presence in Mali, as shown again during the hand over process of the military base of Gossi to MAF in April. The actions most likely aim at influencing the (key) Malian population in favour of the transition authorities and to legitimise the close cooperation with Russia and Russia-affiliated forces, discrediting those who could challenge the authorities and deflecting attention from Russia-affiliated forces atrocities against civilians. The observed actions have an important pan-Africanist dimension, and they have a

corresponding physical component, as observed during and after staged protests. More recently, these information manipulation activities expanded in the Sahel, especially in Burkina Faso and Niger.

20. For the time being, the EU CSDP Mission presence in Mali has been preserved from direct attacks through information manipulation and disinformation. Government officials are generally appreciative of EU support and tend not to implicate the bloc in broader geopolitical competition. Furthermore, the two CSDP Missions have little visibility and force recognition in the country, which is seen by them as participating to their protection strategy. However, this limited awareness in the public opinion may lead to its conflation with the French engagement.

f) Migration

21. In terms of irregular migration flow, Mali is both a country of origin and of transit. As a country of origin, mainly towards European countries. Mali is also a country of transit for ECOWAS nationals who enter Mali legally. Their preferred Border Control Poste is the one of Hèrèmakono, with Burkina Faso. Within Mali, the flow splits roughly into three routes: a) Gao towards Bordj Badji Mokhtar (Algeria) and the Central Mediterranean route, b) Timbuktu towards Morocco and Spain or c) Bamako and Gogui towards Mauritania and the Western Atlantic route.
22. The human smuggling rings' *modi operandi* are shaped by the State vacuum and the pervasive presence of armed groups in the north and centre. Most of these networks are famil or clanic based. They operate according to an informal and flexible organisation, in small areas they know perfectly well. They stay in touch with armed groups who extort levies to cross their territories.

III. EU INTERESTS, POLITICAL OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

23. The overarching EU political objective is to contribute to the stabilization of Mali, which remains the epicentre of violence in the Sahel region and is a cornerstone to the stability of the wider Sahel region. It is in the EU interest to promote peace, reconciliation and dialogue, and to support the delivery of public services throughout Mali, as well as the development of national strategies addressing the country's challenges, including insecurity, terrorism and

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violent extremism and radicalisation, demography, climate change, poor governance, underdevelopment and food insecurity.

24. The European Union remains one of Mali's main political, diplomatic, humanitarian, security and development partners. The Sahel Strategy is the framework for EU engagement to help Mali addressing its key challenges, notably through the security, humanitarian and development nexus. The EU has thus been implementing an integrated approach associating political engagement, development, good governance and security/stabilisation objectives, with a specific attention paid to the most vulnerable areas in the North and the Centre.
25. Mali and the EU are both engaged in the Partnership for the Security and Stability in the Sahel (P3S), within the political framework of the Sahel Coalition. Mali committed to implement the Coalition roadmap developed in March 2021, after the N'Djamena Summit of February 2021. EUTM and EUCAP Mali are in particular supporting the Malian authorities on that regard for the pillars 2 and 3, which cover the support to i) enhancing the capacities of the defence and internal security forces; ii) increasing the presence of State civilian administration in the regions; iii) reinforcing judicial institutions and investigation services; iv) strengthening the fight against impunity, in particular through support to military justice, and confidence building between the ISF and the population.
26. This range of actions contributes to the “civilian and political surge” requested by the Communiqué of the N'Djamena Summit. The review of the Coalition roadmap process, which started in April 2022, should allow Mali to capitalise on best practices, in particular as regards the support to the deployment of State services, but also in the field of judicial chain and accountability.
27. The EU actions in Mali are based on 4 priorities: (i) reinforcing the governance and State's legitimate presence over the territory, (ii) stimulating economic growth and private investments to foster job creation and curb irregular migration, (iii) supporting the provision of basic services in particular in fragile geographic areas and (iv) contributing to the return of security and lasting stability. Nevertheless, the current political situation and the Russia-affiliated forces' growing influence has led the EU to reconsider the scope of its engagement and suspend some programmes. (**Annex A** provides additional details to the EU actions in Mali).

IV. OVERVIEW OF THE SECURITY SECTOR IN MALI

a) Overview of the Malian Armed Forces

28. MAF have only modestly evolved since 2020. They still have important structural deficiencies preventing actual improvement and are trying to reform and reorganize themselves while being committed in operations on the Malian soil. The deployment of Russia-affiliated forces in December 2021 and their engagement in operations alongside MAF in the centre of the country led to a change in the operational posture of the MAF. It is also assessed that Russia-affiliated forces are gradually more present and influent at the strategic level. This change in the environment is detrimental to the long-term progress of the MAF towards professionalization and will prevent any democratic oversight over the MAF in the foreseeable future.
29. MAF, comprising around 28.000 people, are still deployed at almost 90% of their capacity on operational tasks, a situation which is unsustainable. To restore security and stability in Mali, MAF started one new framework operation in January 2020 but the implementation of operation Maliko was frozen in March 2020. It was built upon a comprehensive approach (security, governance, development, disarmament and reintegration), as well as cross-border, regional and international cooperation. It included a redeployment plan for the MAF in the centre of Mali to regroup dispersed units and build strongholds to regain a liberty of manoeuvre. It also established an operational cycle which was not implemented.
30. Operation Kélétigui, launched in December 2021, is a complement to the first phase of operation Maliko and aims to take over the initiative in the centre. It combines grid operations conducted by sector forces with aero-terrestrial interventions by the Special Forces battalion and reserve forces supported by Russia-affiliated forces, with little consideration to the respect of human rights and international humanitarian law. MAF communicate weekly on the success of the operations (allegedly almost 400 terrorists killed in three months) while minimising the losses and negating the numerous allegations of human rights violations during operations.
31. At the strategic level, the EMGA is undertaking a series of reforms, most of which require resources it does not have. The implementation of the *Loi d'Orientation et de Programmation Militaire* (LOPM) 2015-2019 shows limited progress and has not arrived at the set objectives

in terms of recruitment. The follow-up LOPM has been developed but was not presented to the parliament. An inadequate decision-making process, based on limited command and control means, makes any progress difficult.

32. MAF have recently benefitted from numerous deliveries of equipment, most of it having been ordered in the framework of the previous LOPM. At the end of 2021, a spectacular handover to the army was publicised, corresponding to the equipment of 16 companies (more than one hundred vehicles of all types and origin). Since 2019, Mali has acquired 12 aircrafts, including 10 Russian helicopters, bringing the helicopters in operation to 13. This relative abundance of equipment is an asset for the MAF, but it will eventually become a logistical problem for training and maintenance, given the diversity of models and origins.
33. MAF are involved in a comprehensive process to harmonize and verify all human resources records. This is the first serious attempt to have a reliable database including all MAF personnel military data. In the absence of a functioning human resources management system, MAF are not currently in a position to implement sound human resources policies. According to the joint chief of staff, almost 40 percent of the MAF are now registered within the human resources management system and 95 percent of the MAF are paid through banking services. These figures are probably overestimated; they nevertheless demonstrate progress.
34. MAF are progressing in the establishment of a coherent intelligence structure at different headquarters levels. A complete set of intelligence courses has been delivered by EUTM Mali with the aim of training enough personnel to fulfil the required positions. However, the lack of intelligence collection capabilities, both human and technical, is still a major concern. The lack of proper intelligence in the preparation and conduct of operations is having a negative impact on their results. Communication and information system is one of the other major concerns at strategic and operational levels.
35. In the logistic domain, the MAF are receiving training in maintenance and supply. Nevertheless, well-trained personnel cannot compensate for the permanent lack of proper logistic facilities and resources (infrastructure and resources). These resource constraints limit the scope and sustainability of operations that can be undertaken.

b) Overview of the Malian Security Forces

36. The Malian Internal Security Forces represent around 25 000 people (National Police 11 045, national Gendarmerie 5 250, National Guard 8 250). Despite limited progress in strengthening ISF capacity, territorial coverage has not been ensured throughout Mali and has decreased since 2012. The security forces still face important difficulties in deploying to the north and centre of the country mainly. The number of staff mobilised in this region is at the expense of other regions which are weakened, particularly in the southern part of the country now facing terrorist attacks while most of the ISF are posted in Bamako reinforcing the imbalance. The National Police is planning to recruit 5,500 additional officers from the 2022-2026 plan (2,500 were selected in 2020).
37. Despite promising initiatives to adopt the structural reforms of ISFs undertaken by the Transition, such as the adoption of a national strategic plan on the Security Sector Reform, the Malian authorities did not carry out all the reforms necessary for the effectiveness of ISFs due to a lack of ownership. The internal security programming law (LOPSI) has not yet been adopted, while the overall responsibility of security sector reform has just been transferred from the Prime Minister to the Minister of security and civilian protection (MSPC). The militarisation of ISFs is an orientation of the transition to tackle insecurity in the country more effectively. Recent and encouraging progress in the fight against impunity by military ISFs is being undermined by interference with Russia-affiliated forces, and subsequent alarming increase of abuses committed by DSF.
38. In the Centre (Mopti and Segou) the implementation of the security component of the *Plan de Sécurisation Intégrée des Régions du Centre* (PSIRC), through the redeployment of ISF staff and the establishment of the Secure Development and Governance Poles (PSDG), is currently at a standstill. 10 out of the identified 20 PSDGs are staffed and only six were accessible to EUCAP Sahel Mali because of the increasing insecurity in the central region. The EU (FFU/NDICI), together with some MS, has funded the Konna (delivered in 2019), Tominian, Timissa, and Sayed and Korientze poles (delivered in 2021).
39. The units (both National Guard and National Gendarmerie) in these posts, which were trained by EUCAP Sahel Mali prior to their deployment, are now under military command and are integrated in joint operations with Russia-affiliated forces, public security missions have become marginal. The occupation of these sites by Russia-affiliated forces places them

currently outside the scope of the EUCAP. The PSDGs are therefore reduced to a ‘Fortin’ function used by the MAF, and hardly fulfil their planned objectives.

40. ISFs have made overall progress in designing and implementing their public security tasks but incidences of impunity are still prevalent and consequently undermine public confidence. ISFs have unprotected infrastructure and limited mobility capacity. The allegations of abuses committed by the Defence Forces at the Centre only exacerbate local tensions against the Malian State.
41. The Malian State has great difficulty in maintaining its presence at the borders, controlling the territory and implementing its integrated border management strategy. A border unit dedicated to border protection and security was set up in May 2019 within the National Gendarmerie. The Decree on the reorganisation of the Border Police Directorate is not yet implemented. In the North and Centre of Mali, the redeployment of state authorities (administrative and judicial) is limited to a few urban agglomerations outside which the State exercises no control over the territory, despite the timid redeployment of the first units of the reconstituted Malian army.
42. The chains of command of the ISFs are weakened by biased management and corruption but some progress has been made in the organisation of the integrated human resources management system of the Gendarmerie and the National Guard within the Ministry of Defence and former combatants (MDAC) and the banking system for disbursement of salaries. The National Police is working again on a Human Resources Information System (HRIS), as the previous system was voluntarily degraded as a result of the coups.
43. The Malian ISFs have made significant progress in training. The National Gendarmerie has finalised its national training master plan. The Directorate-General for National Police (DGPN) has started to implement its own. The National Police and the National Guard have some capacity to train their own trainers.
44. ISFs have made some progress in the fight against terrorism; the Special Investigation Brigade (BIS), is operational but challenges remains. The *Centre d'Analyse et de Fusion du Renseignement* (CAFR), is fully operational, but performs poorly in the processing and dissemination of information. The Platform for Cooperation in Security Matters (PCMS), in support of the G5 Joint Force, is not operational.

45. In the fight against organised crime, the *Office Central des Stupéfiants* (OCS) of the National Police and the Technical and Scientific Police are now professionalised and have concluded several major investigations. The fight against document fraud has been concentrated in the area of airports. Several draft laws have been prepared on the fight against trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling, and on the functioning of the Central Anti-Trafficking Office and the Malian Migrant Trafficking and Smuggling Brigade (BRTMTEH) is operational since early 2020. The West African Police Information System (SIPAO/WAPIS), is not yet operational in Bamako and the Automated Fingerprint File (FAED) is under development.
46. The progress of an inspection policy varies from one ISF to another. A decree within the National Guard of 2019 reorganised the Military Staff and specified the tasks of the Inspectorate. In the MSPC, texts have been adopted and inspectors from the Ministry have been trained but the procedures are not yet sufficiently generalised; in the MDAC the texts are being drafted. The ISFs have set up gender focal points, in Bamako and in the regions, and is implementing a three-year action plan to combat gender-based violence.
47. The 1st company of the Rapid Action Task Force Intervention and Surveillance (GARSI) is operational and deployed in the Mopti region, before being relocated to the military effort in August 2021. The second and third companies have concluded FOC (Final Operational Capacity training) and are now fully operational and operating in Nara and Gao where they have their headquarters. There are additional funds in the AAP 2021 for the creation of two new units under NDICI, but these are currently suspended due to the political situation.
48. The Ministry of Justice has a specialized jurisdiction in the fight against organised crime and terrorism (*Pôle Judiciaire spécialisé*) with competence in the field of war crimes and against humanity since 2019, relying in particular on the Special Investigation Brigade (BIS), but does not communicate on the outcomes of the investigations. Supervision of magistrates over police investigators is progressing slowly. The Military Justice Code is being revised. The Criminal Chamber of the Bamako Military Tribunal held its first session in November 2021 as well as the first hearings at the Mopti and Ségou Military. In the fight against corruption, the Central Anti-Corruption Office and the financial jurisdiction (*Pôle financier*) have obtained significant judgements against politicians for financial malpractice. However, it

remains difficult to assess whether such convictions are intended to prevent potential political competitors and lead the mission to a reconsideration of the support provided to them.

c) Overview of the G5 Sahel Joint Force

49. At the strategic level, the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S JF) suffers from the lack of political commitment from the leadership of the G5 Sahel member states. In the absence of meeting of an ordinary Defence and Security Committee since the end of August 2021, the joint force commander was not able to obtain the approval of its campaign plan before April 2022, more than eight month after his installation. National decisions to retain command of the G5 Sahel Joint Force battalion, often without prior notice, limit the ability of the joint force commander to plan and conduct operations. The joint force commander was not allowed to conduct an audit of the battalions of the force. The decision to withdraw the Chadian battalion from Tera (in Niger) by the end of April 2022 deprives the force commander of his unique reserve. Furthermore, the effect of the Malian withdrawal on the G5S JF will have to be assessed, also regarding its joint headquarters (PCIAT), located in Bamako.
50. The G5S JF is currently trying to develop its operational capabilities but its structure, based on three geographically unconnected sectors and the absence of reserve, limits the added-value of the PCIAT. Since August 2021, it has not conducted any long term planning and the few operational orders that were initiated were cancelled. The delivery of the new facilities at SENOU Air Base, working buildings and accommodation premises, may improve its functioning. Its staffing suffers from poor selection from the sending militaries, limited personal skills, passive attitudes and lack of leadership highlight the low level of commitment and yield a limited output.
51. The EU and other international partners support Malian authorities with tailored programmes supporting the respect of human rights and IHL by the defence and security forces during operations, including the G5S JF. This support is taking place through the establishment of a human rights and IHL Compliance Framework implemented by the UN/OHCHR. However, the dual chain of command of the G5 Sahel Joint Force makes the application of the Compliance Framework difficult, as it is not extended to the national context.
52. The G5S JF is not yet fully equipped and therefore lacks operational capability. Deliveries under the African Peace Facility are still on-going, and the Assistance Measure (AM) under

the EPF will fill gaps. The implementation of this AM has been suspended for the two Malian battalions of the G5S JF. Additional support is dependent on execution by MINUSMA of the tripartite agreement. The changes in the security environment may compromise the proper flow of supplies, and the final use is linked to the good will of the national contingents. Based on the serious risks of misuse and/or misappropriation, including by Russia-affiliated forces, the Commission has decided to suspend the delivery of logistic support (fuel and rations) to the Malian battalions of the G5S JF.

53. Despite the difficulties, the G5S JF could remain an opportunity to foster cross-border cooperation at the sector level, as the terrorist armed groups remain very active in border areas. To counter this trend, countries are conducting bilateral operations on a regular basis outside of the joint force framework. Pending on the future of the joint force, a more decentralized approach, focusing on pragmatic solution at sector level, could be useful and capitalise on the investment made in the joint force.

d) International security forces

54. Following the joint decision to withdraw Barkhane and Takuba from Mali, the redeployment of forces will be finalised this summer with the transfer to the Malian government of the two remaining bases in Menaka and Gao. This security vacuum will lead to a further degradation of the security situation. France is committed to continue to provide reassurance measures to the international forces in Mali, but any support is contingent on the authorization of Malian authorities since they have imposed no-fly zones over the centre of the country. The unilateral decision by the Malian authorities to denounce the SOFA for Barkhane does not bode well for improvement in the security situation in the future.
55. MINUSMA remains present in the North and the Centre of Mali with three objectives, support the implementation of the Peace Accord, support the return of the state in the Centre of Mali, and protection of civilians. It has been able to achieve only very limited success, if any, as Malian authorities prevent it to implement its mandate. MINUSMA force continued to implement its adaptation plan to cope more adequately with the situation, but it still lacks air assets and the capacities to act and react quickly. These gaps will not be covered in the near future while its freedom of action is continuously hampered by Malian decisions, despite the provision of the in-force SOFA. MINUSMA is also responsible to ensure coordination

amongst international forces present in Mali through the coordination instances. After promising results in 2020 and 2021 and the implementation of joint roadmaps, the Malian shift of paradigm voided the coordination process of its possibilities. The mandate of MINUSMA is being reviewed and shall be renewed on 30 June 2022.

56. The future of the G5 Sahel Joint Force may lead to a renewed interest in the idea of deploying an African force to complement the current military response in the fight against terrorism. ECOWAS chiefs of defence staff met in Ghana in the beginning of May to find ways to reinforce military cooperation in the region.

e) Russia-affiliated forces

57. Russia-affiliated forces were deployed to Mali in December 2021, allegedly in the framework of the bilateral Mali-Russia defence cooperation treaty, to support the Malian military response. They complement Russian technicians and instructors, who have been present in Mali for years to support MAF in the use of Russian equipment, notably helicopters, with combat operators engaged in operations alongside MDSF in the centre. Despite compelling evidence, Malian authorities have repeatedly denied the presence of Wagner group mercenaries in Mali and the absence of contract with the Wagner company.
58. It is assessed that about 1,000 Russia-affiliated personnel, mostly relying on Malian equipment, are deployed in Mali, with a notable presence in Sévaré, Ségou, Niono, Timbuktu and Gossi in MAF camps. Air Base 101, in Bamako, is used as a logistical hub for their deployment.
59. Their combat actions might only reduce the number of terrorist attacks in the short term enabling the Malian government to claim success. However, they will significantly increase instability, ethnic violence and divides within the society in the medium term, undermine the Peace Agreement, and fuel the terrorist armed groups' rhetoric. Numerous Human Rights violation by Russia-affiliated forces have been reported.

V. EUTM MALI MANDATE EVALUATION AND MISSION ASSESSMENT

60. The aim of EUTM Mali (CD/CFSP 2022/434) is to assist the Malian Armed Forces in restoring their military capacity with a view to enabling them to conduct military operations aiming at restoring Malian territorial integrity and reducing the threat posed by terrorist

groups, and to provide military assistance to the G5 Sahel Joint Force as well as national armed forces in the G5 Sahel countries. The Mission mandate underlines that Malian Armed Forces should operate under the control of Mali's legitimate civilian authorities; in that respect a political agreement with ECOWAS is very important. The Mission's current (fifth) mandate expires on 18 May 2024.

61. This mandate is based on the assumptions that the Malian political authorities support the deployment of EUTM Mali and guarantee a full and complete cooperation with the Mission. Malian authorities reiterated on several occasions their willingness to continue and foster the cooperation with the EU in the field of defence. Despite a formal written request of HRVP Borrell in March 2022, Malian authorities have not granted the mission with the required guarantees regarding its functioning in their answer.
62. To reach its strategic objectives (set out below), EUTM Mali provides the Malian Armed Forces, the G5 Sahel Joint Forces and the national armed forces of the G5 Sahel countries with military advice, training, including pre-deployment training, education and mentoring, through non-executive accompaniment up to the tactical level. Non-executive accompaniment was intended as a way to enable EUTM Mali to follow up on the activities of the MAF and to monitor their performance and their behaviour, including with regard to the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.
63. Malian authorities repeatedly expressed their need for equipment and ammunition to complement the training provided by EUTM Mali and requested the implementation of a 'train and equip' package during the last strategic review. At that time, the EU was not able to positively answer to this request, also due to a lack of available instruments. This situation limited the impact of the training provided as well as the political buy-in of Malian partners. In the Malian narrative, this is one of the reasons which led them to diversify their partnership and ask for Russia and Russia-affiliated forces support.

a) Strategic objective 1: improving the operational capacity of the Malian Armed Forces

64. The latest EUTM Mali Strategic Review stressed that a decentralized approach, focusing on pre-deployment training and accompaniment of MAF, was necessary to support them adequately as they are engaged in operations.

65. **Decentralization and pre-deployment training** directly contributed to the empowerment of MAF. In 2021, it represented 50 percent of the training activities and 75 percent of the trainees of EUTM Mali and it is in line with the request of the Malian authorities. However MAF units trained by EUTM regularly lacked the necessary training equipment such as ammunition, weapons, vehicles and communication assets. Training infrastructure available at all decentralized locations (Ségou, Sévaré and Gao) is scarce and in poor condition, which limits the efficiency of EUTM training. The MAF have nevertheless requested more decentralized activities. The decision to suspend operational training benefitting formed units is an important decrease in Mission activities and will impact the MAF operational capabilities.
66. The implementation of **non-executive accompaniment** remained minimal, notably due to imposed restrictions (operating in secured locations), lack of resources, logistical difficulties and reluctance of the MAF. It therefore has failed to deliver on its anticipated benefits. The Mission did not implement the most ambitious part (accompaniment at units' level and support to operational planning) but focused on "structural accompaniment", which was distinguished from an "operational accompaniment" the latter consisting of accompanying real operations' planning and conduct. This structural accompaniment has been enacted by the deployment of advisors in the Malian strategic level headquarters, in military regions' headquarters and in the different schools, as well as a focus on train-the-trainers courses. This focus on structural accompaniment consequently limited the ability of the Mission to monitor the behavior and performance of Malian units and to adapt accordingly the training it provides to MAF. This was partly compensated in a burden-sharing model, where operational accompaniment was to be implemented by international partners, especially Barkhane and Task Force Takuba. The on-going withdrawal of these forces from Mali prevents this model to become operational.
67. The current political environment has not been conducive for the conduct of **advisory activities at the strategic level**. Access to high-level authorities or sensitive subject such as the LOPM or human resource management has drastically reduced, especially since the second coup d'Etat. As the French contingent constituted the backbone of the advisory task force, the caveat preventing French soldiers to interact with Malian authorities (since

February) has had an important impact on this pillar. At the operational level, some successes have been achieved with the intelligence and logistics branches to support the development of capacities, which remains embryonic. Another obstacle to the achievement of EUTM Mali in terms of advisory activities lies within the Mission and the human resource provided by Member States. There are important manning shortfalls (ATF is manned at 40%) and the personnel rotate too frequently (every four to six months) to build lasting relationship. This has resulted in interruptions to the advising schedules, a lack of continuity as well as loss of momentum and effect. One of the main reasons for the lack of advisors is the paucity of French-speaking officers made available by many Member States. EUTM Mission Commander and Mission Force Commander, as well as the Malians, have stressed that a necessary level of proficiency in the French language among those EUTM personnel in direct contact with the MDAC or the MAF is an essential criterion for success.

b) Strategic objective 2: support the G5 Sahel

- 68. Support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force** remained limited to advisory activities in support of the joint command post in Bamako and pre-deployment training of the joint and sector command posts within the G5 Sahel Defence College in Mauritania. The Mission did not conduct pre-deployment training for the battalions or advisory activities benefitting to the sector command post, due to logistical challenges, lacking resources and coordination challenges with G5S JF partners.
- 69. Burkina Faso.** The Mission conducted three training activities in support of the Burkinabe armed forces, as well as one training and one advisory activity in support of the Burkinabe security forces. The few activities carried out by EUTM, limited by the chosen non-permanent deployment model, are not commensurate with the urgent need for defence support. The discussion between the Mission and the Burkinabe joint staff were based on the course catalogue developed by the mission to support the MAF, which did not fit the Burkinabe requirement. Consequently, specific requests outside of the course catalogue could not be easily answered. The limited level of engagement is also due to the logistical difficulties to deploy from Mali to Burkina Faso, currently reinforced by the closure of borders between Mali and its neighbouring countries. Furthermore, Malian authorities imposed that requests are made for any cross-border flight which de facto grant them control

over the activities of the Mission outside Mali despite the provision of the SOMA. Eventually, scarce resources within the Mission in Mali (such as medical support) led to prioritize the core mandate over the regionalization of the Mission.

70. **Niger.** Support of the Niger armed forces through the integration of the German Task Force Gazelle within EUTM Mali has been a success. The business model of the Task Force, implementing a Train, Equip and Accompany approach focused on a single unit, could represent a pilot case for future EU actions. This model has been praised by Nigerien authorities and will result in the declaration of the full operational capability of the supported battalion during the autumn 2022. On the other hand, EUTM itself has not been able to conduct any activity in Niger for various reasons. Among them, the difficulty to establish a legal framework for EUTM Mali in Niger, the name of the Mission which is a concern for Nigerien authorities and the lack of buy-in of authorities as EUTM Mali, due to mutual misunderstandings, was not able to provide a bespoke solution to their solicitations.

VI. EUCAP SAHEL MALI MANDATE EVALUATION AND MISSION ASSESSMENT

71. EUCAP Sahel Mali aims at creating the necessary conditions for a full return to constitutional and democratic order in Mali, good governance and the rule of law, including in the centre of the country. EUCAP Sahel Mali assist and advise the Internal Security Forces (ISF) in the implementation of the Security Reform led by the Government of Mali, with a view to: (I) improving their operational efficiency; (II) re-establishing the respective hierarchical chains of the ISF through a more coherent management of resources; (III) reinforcing the role of judicial and administrative authorities with regard to the management and supervision of their missions, contributing to the prevention of corruption and impunity; (IV) facilitating the redeployment of the ISF to the Centre of Mali; and (V) supporting in a gradual and modular process the redeployment of Mali's civilian administrative authorities to the Centre of Mali, based on good governance principles.
72. After eight years of presence in Mali, limited progress has been made towards the desired final state. The Mission's mandate remains relevant for the long term but requires a slight adaptation in light of the current situation. The decision of the Malian authorities to focus on a military response to the growing security crisis, involving the National guards and Gendarmes in the military operations, limits the possible support by the Mission. Additionally, the

involvement of Russia-affiliated forces, in these military operations, is a source of major concern. Consequently, the reinforcement of operational capacities of the two internal security forces with military status should be reconsidered.

73. The context in which EUCAP Sahel Mali has to implement its mandate is particularly challenging as institutional governance reform is not the first priority for the authorities facing the emergency; restoring public confidence in the centre remains a major challenge jeopardised by the allegation of the MAF's abuses. The operational effectiveness of Malian ISF is still limited by deep structural deficits. Furthermore, the militarisation of ISF means that the majority of staff (Gendarmerie and National Guard, equal to 56 % of the 25000 ISF personnel), are under direct military command. When trained by the Mission, they return to their services of origin, where mainly military tasks are entrusted to them, without any monitoring of the progress made. The return of the State to the Centre, notably the ISFs under a civilian chain of command, is currently not possible.
74. The good results achieved in training and the development of certain capacities allow their partial transfer to the Malian partners, which is part of the exit strategy based on the following criteria: (i) The redeployment, even partial, of the internal security forces in the centre and especially in the north of the country; (ii) The reform of human resources management has progressed but require long-term support and remain subject to effective ownership by the Malian authorities (iii) Strengthening the functional and hierarchical link between the civilian authorities and the three security forces; if the hierarchical link seems to be restored the militarisation of military ISFs, by a military led government undermines the progress observed and the chain of command is strictly vertical (iv) The professionalization of the fight against organised crime and terrorism still needs to be promoted and gaps filled, in particular the criminal justice chain.
75. Efforts in the fight against impunity were made as the revision of the Military Code, the establishment of inspection and internal control services for MDAC forces, despite a limited number of investigators and significant technical and decision-making difficulties.
76. The Mission achieved overall satisfactory results thanks to the training and support component for human resources reform, with some ownership of the Malian partner and confirmed its strategic position with the ISF hierarchy. EUCAP Sahel Mali is the only major

international security actor regularly present in the southern regions (Kayes, Koulikoro and Sikasso) and supported the establishment of the PSDG. However, the worsening security conditions at the Centre severely limit these efforts.

77. The Mission three lines of operation are focusing respectively on structural capacities, operational capacities and ethical standards.

a) Line of operation 1 — Strengthening of structural capacities

78. The Mission supported the structural capacities of the ISF through its support to human resources management and to the coordination amongst the forces, despite a certain lack of advisers and experts. The global level of ownership remains rather limited; a window of opportunity was noticed between the two military coups, but rapidly closed thereafter.
79. The Mission supported the MDAC and MSPC's HR services to develop human resources management systems. MDAC is finalizing the digitalisation of the HR system and the bancarisation of the salary payments is ongoing.
80. The Decree setting up a Directorate for the Prevôté within the DGGN is still pending.
81. Some progress were noted regarding the coordination of the forces, especially with the ongoing creation of an inter-force transmission network for the Centre for Coordination and Management of Crises and Disasters (CECOGEC) to improve coordination between central and regional commands and the field units. The architecture remains however very centralised. The mission also provides support to the Security Sub-Committee set up under the MSPC.

b) Line of operation 2 — Strengthening of operational capacities

82. The Mission has made good progress to transfer the training activities to the Malian partner by concentrating its efforts on trainer training and accompaniment, in particular for ISF staff deployed in the central region and for the Gendarmerie officers assigned to the FC G5S.
83. By gradually moving towards more specialised training courses, the Mission was able to focus on creating a pool of trainers in the forces. The National Gard is now able to pre-deployment training activities. Accompanying measures, combining observation, evaluation, advice and in-situ training for Malian trainers are being put in place and deliver good results.

The Prevost are trained with the objective to accompany the MAF in all their missions. However there is no clear and positive results from their commitment along with the MAF. The Mobile Unit, which has been in the secure site of La Palmeraie in Sévaré (Mopti) since February 2020, has carried out activities to support ISFs deployed in the PSDGs. Its activities were strongly limited due to the worsening security conditions, combined with the difficulties in renewing its staff, which led to its relocation to Bamako (end of March).

84. The Mission's activities focus on supporting specialised units (BIS) and improving legislation on terrorism and organised crime. The results of the investigation services (with the exception of the Office for Narcotic Drugs and the technical and scientific police) do not yet sufficiently reflect the new professional knowledge acquired. The BIS is operational and capable of conducting the investigation component of the G5 Sahel Joint Force Police Unit and of integrating it into the national anti-terrorism system, but has recently become less constructive towards the mission. The Mission provided legislative assistance in the fight against trafficking of persons, as well as support in the area of border management and migration flows, but without sufficient concrete results in prosecution.

c) Line of operation 3 — Strengthening of the ethical standards

85. The Mission has developed the oversight mechanisms of the ISF, supporting the consolidation of the hierarchical chain and strengthening the control of the services (control, audit and investigation) within the three Forces.
86. EUCAP supported the rapprochement between ISF and the population .The deployment of the mobile unit based in Mopti/Sevaré enabled aimed at developing a better collaboration with local stakeholders through support to the Security Advisory Committees and it was a European marker in the Centre till its relocation.
87. The activities of the Mission have led to progress in the fight against impunity, and the holding of trials. In addition, human rights and gender values are more integrated in the ISF and the administration.

d) Coordination with external partners as a cross-cutting issue

88. Coordination with MINUSMA has included the integration of EUCAP into the Instance de Coordination in Mali (ICM) led by MINUSMA and activities conducted with the UNPOL component in the field of impunity that resulted in the sentencing of military personnel, and in preparation for elections. EUCAP Sahel Mali coordinates with US cooperation in the management of human resources and the fight against terrorism (US training cooperation is currently suspended), all EU MS present in Mali, Canada and Japan. A coordinated approach with international organisation (such IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, ICRC) and NGO's contributes to create synergies and avoid overlap in the interventions.
89. Cooperation with EUTM was strengthened through training for the National Guard, notably pre-deployment training and the National Gendarmerie, the management of human resources at MDAC level and the optimisation of synergies in the logistical and security support of EUTM to decentralised missions. Such training, as for EUTM, is currently suspended.
90. Together with EUCAP Sahel Niger and the RACC, the Mission contributed to the training of officers at the Joint Force Force of Theatre (PCIAT) and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S). Finally, the Mission provides expertise and support for the IcSP/FPI project to support the G5 component. Exchanges with EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUBAM Libya continued in the

framework of the Libya-Sahel Coordination Forum on cross-border cooperation issues and the exchange of best practices.

VII. MAIN PARAMETERS FOR FUTURE CSDP ACTIONS

91. **Preserve the credibility of the EU.** This parameter is crucial but poses a dilemma for the EU; on the one hand, CSDP is a high profile and visible engagement representing as it does the values and standards of the EU but requires a continued close interaction with the institutions in Mali, themselves recalcitrant. Without this interaction, the EU leaves a security vacuum, which will be occupied by geostrategic competitors whose standards and values fall way below those of the EU. A delicate balance has to be found for every aspect of each Mission. Drawing lessons from the experience in Mali for future engagement, a more ambitious approach in the support, in line with the Strategic Compass, would reinforce the credibility of the EU as a security provider in the region. The art is finding a way to remain engaged but without tacit acceptance of the presence of the EU's competitors.
92. **Partnership-based approach.** To maximize the impact of CSDP, our Missions must respond to Host Nations requirements through bespoke solutions. It is important to further develop the understanding of the environment and to build trust and confidence with partners. This will rely on the long-term presence of certain key actors within the Missions. This is relatively easy to do in the case of EUCAP Sahel Mali, but requires increasing the duration of rotation for some essential positions in CSDP military missions to at least twelve months. The Niger parliament recently voted in favour of allowing the deployment of foreign forces to fight jihadists; this is promising. The political situation in Burkina Faso is still unclear and currently not conducive for such a partnership, but the EU should be able to offer a partnership when the time is ripe.
93. **Flexibility.** In a complex and very fluid environment, it is paramount to reinforce the flexibility of the Missions to adapt their posture rapidly to protect themselves against emerging risks or seize new opportunities. The new model of missions described in the concept for enhancing EU military missions effectiveness could be used as a blueprint to design the CSDP action in Burkina Faso and in Niger, if conditions allow.
94. **Effectiveness and risk aversion.** The ability of EUTM Mali to reach the level of ambition described in the last Strategic Review was hampered by risk aversion, lack of resources and

various caveats from several Member States. To achieve ambitious and robust aims for EU military missions, as demanded in the Strategic Compass, EU Member States must deliver on generating the required forces, equipment provision for partners and accept the risks associated with closer accompaniment of partner forces closer to the combat zone.

95. **Human Rights.** The EU CSDP missions in Mali should strengthen their prevention activities and invest more in the support of justice actors. Human rights and IHL trainings should be strengthened and provided at the tactical level and through practical exercises, with the inclusion of dedicated modules on sexual and gender-based violence and child protection. Follow-up through mentoring would ensure that training and education are effectively translated into practice. The necessity of building trust between local security and defence forces and the communities in which they work needs to be addressed as part of all activities. In addition to training, the missions should invest more in advisory activities replicating at the national level some of the mechanisms of the Compliance Framework. It is important to tackle the culture of impunity within the forces and influence the doctrine.
96. **Strategic communication.** The information environment in Mali and the Sahel region is prone to hate speech, information manipulation and disinformation, preventing the population from having full access to reliable information. It is important to pro-actively fight information manipulation in theatre and improve active, fact-based and targeted EU strategic communication, while exposing and denouncing Russia-affiliated forces' actions and their infringements of international norms. Strategic communication will be paramount to support the possible establishment of new CSDP military presence in Niger and Burkina Faso to avoid destabilizing the local authorities and creating an anti-EU sentiment.
97. **Coordination and complementarity.** In line with the EU Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, coordination between the CSDP Missions in the Sahel and with EU Delegations as well as bilateral efforts of EU Member States need to be further reinforced on transverse issues such as human rights, international humanitarian law, and strategic communication, to ensure coherence and complementarity between all actions. Furthermore, the EU actions participate to the international efforts to stabilize the Sahel in the framework of the Sahel Coalition roadmap. Therefore, closer coordination with international partners, especially MINUSMA, should be pursued.

VIII. POSSIBLE FUTURE CSDP ENGAGEMENT IN MALI

a) Common to both Missions

98. The Malian authorities expressed their willingness to continue defence and security cooperation with the EU, but the mutual trust has deteriorated. In order not to create a vacuum which will be exploited to the detriment of EU interests, CSDP presence in Mali, should be maintained but refocused towards structural support at the strategic level. This balance would preserve EU interests and prevent any reputational risk while keeping the capacity to resume activities when conditions are met. A continued presence would enable the EU to closely follow the developments in the security environment and demonstrate the EU willingness to support and cooperate even under difficult and less permissive circumstances. Strategic patience is required in this regard.
99. Both CSDP Missions should continue to be deployed in Mali, operating from Bamako to provide strategic advice to the respective ministries and executive structures of MAF and ISF. Coordination with the UN/MINUSMA and other regional organisations present in Mali should be enhanced.
100. In order to address the challenging HR, IHL situation and gender equality in the country, both CSDP Missions would continue to provide strategic advice and education in this domain. CSDP Missions should make an effort to mainstream women, child protection and children in armed conflict agenda into their activities, where relevant. Additionally, Missions should develop ways to further support the personnel responsible for the implementation of advice and education on HR, IHL and gender equality into practice, with a focus on legal advisors when appropriate.
101. A more prominent positioning of the EU and its CSDP engagement through enhanced and pro-active strategic communication in Mali would accompany the adaptation of CSDP engagement and further foster the public promotion of EU values and respect for international standards, while also targeting other actors.

b) EUTM Mali

102. Malian authorities repeated that they wish EUTM Mali to implement a train and equip approach and that the EU provides ammunition for the training of Malian forces. If conditions

were met for operational training to resume, it would be necessary to foresee the provision of training, equipment and training ammunition from the onset. This would be a concrete demonstration of EU's commitment towards Mali and reinforce the EU credibility as a security provider. However, responding positively to these requests is currently out of reach. Indeed, it would be necessary to first rebuild mutual trust with the Malian authorities, as they failed to provide the requested guarantees on the absence of interference of Russia-affiliated forces with the units trained and equipped by the EU. Appropriate safeguards would include the accompaniment of Malian units down to the tactical level as well the involvement of EUTM Mali in the planning of MAF operations. Their implementation under the current political circumstances seems unlikely.

103. The mitigation of EU's reputational risk and credibility should be sought through the adaptation of the scope of activities of EUTM Mali. The Mission may then be perceived as not relevant by the Malian authorities. The risk that they unilaterally decide to expel EUTM Mali or further prevent its functioning cannot be excluded. On 27 April 2022, reiterating a previous request made in 2019, that the Mission frees the infrastructures it occupies in Koulikouro, the Malian authorities explicitly indicated that the suspension of training is a blow to the on-going buildup of the MAF.
104. **Training.** The current temporary and reversible suspension of operational training benefitting formed units still carries reputational risks for the EU. It should be extended to all the training activities that are reinforcing the operational capabilities of the MAF, to include individual training (sharp shooters, tactical air controller, etc.), as long as the Malian's choice of tactics, techniques and procedures remains contradictory with the EU values. A continued investment limited to train-the-trainer courses on subjects like human rights and international humanitarian law, protection of civilians or lifesaving could represent a way to remain engaged in training while mitigating the risks; it is consistent with the exit-strategy of the Mission. Unless there is a reversal by the Malian authorities in their decision to continue operating with Russia-affiliated forces or the said forces themselves withdraw, the reactivation of suspended EUTM training activities seems unlikely. If conditions were to be

met¹, a resumption of recurrent training to Malian armed forces could be foreseen under the approval of Member States. Depending when those activities could restart, it is highly likely that a new training plan would have to be designed. This temporary and reversible suspension would *de facto* stop the decentralization process of the Mission and lead to a substantial reduction of the Mission size in Mali since the operational training represents approximately three quarters of the training pillar.

105. **Education.** EUTM support to education structures could be extended, to address the poor leadership performance by Malian armed forces officers and NCO. It should include the possible non-operational support of the officer school (EMIA in Koulikouro) and NCO school (in Banankoro). This would also maintain an EU influence over the future staff of the Malian armed forces. As the cadre of NCOs constitutes the backbone of any armed forces, their education in the field of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law is paramount to enable them to refuse to commit abuses and ensure discipline amongst the troops. A continued investment in leadership education, synchronized with education provided at the NCO school, is required.
106. **Advice.** Advisory activities should continue while being focused only on structural subjects and avoiding any participation to operational discussions under the current circumstances. If security conditions allow, regional advisory teams should continue to accompany the military region headquarters on structural matters. This regional advisory team would provide insights on the situation and assess the evolution of the MAF in the current environment and would be consistent with the adapted model of EU CSDP military engagement proposed to, and adopted by the EU Military Committee.

c) EUCAP Sahel Mali

107. The Mission's **mandate** should be maintained and should include the facilitation of the deployment of ISF in the South of Mali. Its fourth strategic objective should therefore be revised. The mandate should be as follows: EUCAP Sahel Mali shall assist and advise the Internal Security Forces (ISF) in the implementation of the Security Reform led by the

¹ in particular free and entire functioning of the Mission according to the SOMA, absence of any interference of Russia-affiliated forces with the units trained by EUTM and mechanisms to prevent Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law violations

Government of Mali, with a view to: (I) improving their operational efficiency; (II) re-establishing the respective hierarchical chains of the ISF through a more coherent management of resources; (III) reinforcing the role of judicial and administrative authorities with regard to the management and supervision of their missions, contributing to the prevention of corruption and impunity; (IV) facilitating the redeployment of the ISF to the Centre **and their deployment to the South of Mali;** and (V) supporting in a gradual and modular process the redeployment of Mali's civilian administrative authorities to the Centre of Mali, based on good governance principles.

108. However, due to the current context, the Mission's efforts towards improving the operational efficiency of the ISF should be focused on the National Police. In the same vein, the facilitation of the redeployment of the ISF to the Centre of Mali should be temporarily and reversibly suspended.
109. **Advice.** The Mission should capitalise on its relationships in the ministries to reinforce strategic advice, notably in activities contributing to a better governance of ISFs and prioritize the activities currently not subject to interference with Russia-affiliated forces, in particular by further supporting investigative units against transnational organised crime (drugs, human trafficking, firearms and environmental crime), terrorism and illegal migration, as well as forensics.
110. **Training and education** could be focused on specialised training activities notably on investigation topics (forensics, criminal investigation, sexual and gender-based violence) and keeping a train the trainer approach. All operational training for the National Guard and National Gendarmerie should be temporarily and reversibly suspended. The support to investigative units in charge of fighting impunity in particular the *Prevôte* and activities contributing to a better governance of the forces (human rights, gender, deontology) could continue.
111. **Coordination** The Mission's activities in support of a redeployment of the civil administrative authorities in the Centre may continue, notably through a support to the newly established Malian academy for the *Préfets* (MATD) as well as further development of local initiatives such as the *Comités consultatifs de sécurité* contributing to the stabilisation and involving local populations. In addition, this mandate could explore, with the EUDEL, the

possibilities for further support to strengthening police related capacities as part of the effort against the spillover of terrorist armed groups' activities in the South and West of the country.

d) CSDP transition strategy in Mali

112. The context in which the two CSDP Missions are operating precludes any possibility to reach their respective end-states and transition their activities in an orderly manner in the short to medium term (6 to 12 months). A transition strategy could only be successful if new conditions enabling the progressive and gradual disengagement of our CSDP Missions were to materialise.
113. The issue is more significant for EUTM Mali as, the transformation of the MAF into a professional force, under democratic control, ethnically balanced and operating in compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law, is currently out of reach. The training and strategic advisory objectives of EUTM are far from being achieved. Short of any possible transfer, EUTM activities could be either; (i) maintained until new conditions permit or (ii) terminated. The EU decision to terminate the EUTM mandate could be taken if the delivery of strategic advice and education activities are rendered impossible due to the lack of political buy-in of the Malian authorities. In both cases coordination with all actors, including MINUSMA, as well as a strong strategic communication should be well anticipated.
114. The current EUCAP Sahel Mali mandate appears less affected at this stage however its end-state seems out of reach for the ISF. This is provided that Malian authorities continue to support and enable the reorganization of the ISFs and given the assumption that they will operate under the authority of their legitimate civilian chain of command. Once this is achieved, EUCAP Sahel Mali would terminate its activities. If the necessary conditions are not met, a revision of the EUCAP transition strategy should be undertaken possibly and adjustment of the mission's mandate or the termination of some activities.

IX. POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE CSDP ENGAGEMENT OUTSIDE MALI

115. PSC agreed on 15 March 2022 during the discussions on the possible scenarios for the CSDP missions in the Sahel in light of the Malian crisis that a permanent military CSDP presence is desirable in Niger and in Burkina Faso if conditions allow.

a) Possible military CSDP support to Niger

116. Despite a deteriorating security situation, the investments made by the national authorities and international support for the armed forces has contributed to maintain some stability. President Bazoum has launched important reforms and an ambitious recruitment plan to double the strength of the defence and security forces by 2025. In order to achieve this ambitious target, increased logistic capacities are needed for the Nigerien Armed Forces with the aim to ensure a proper life cycle for the equipment already in use, as this domain remain a weak point in the restructuring of the armed forces.
117. Nigerien authorities have expressed their willingness to enhance their bilateral cooperation with the EU in the field of defence in multiple occasions. They already requested support to build and establish a logistic and maintenance centre of excellence in the vicinity of Niamey. The recent parliamentary vote allowing the deployment of foreign forces fighting jihadists could also be an opportunity to explore with the authorities their willingness to go beyond this initial request to also cover a “train, equip and accompany” package for specific units or even a full-scale military operation to accompany Nigerien armed forces to combat.
118. The EU could initially support the establishment of the logistic and maintenance centre of excellence with a CSDP action designed along the lines of the advisory and mentoring models described in the concept for enhancing EU military missions’ effectiveness, in conjunction with an assistance measure under the EPF. Its objective could be to support the inception and development of training curriculum, to train and mentor the trainers of the centre of excellence, and to advise the human resource department to develop a full career path in the logistics’ and maintenance domain with an initial limited footprint in Niger. It would require long term deployment of advisors and be complemented by on call trainer held at readiness within Member States to provide specialized training and support.
119. The establishment of such an action, flexible enough to be usable to cover additional needs, would create a defence cooperation framework between the EU and Niger and allow for the integration of bilateral efforts in Niger under the EU flag, on the model of the integration of Task Force Gazelle, if such need arise. This would require the development of a CMC.
120. Discussions with the Nigerian authorities should be pursued on a larger scale CSDP offer in support of their armed forces, such as a ‘train, equip and accompany’ approach, with a dedicated Task Force (train and accompany up to combat) in conjunction with an assistance

measure under the EPF. The Council could decide to establish a military CSDP mission for the training (Article 42 TUE), while entrusting a group of Member States (Article 44 TUE) with the accompaniment of Nigerien troops up to combat if both Nigerien and Member States agree, recognising that unanimity by 27 Member States through EU Council Decision is necessary for both. This model could also be applied in Burkina Faso or Mali, if conditions are met.

b) *Possible military CSDP support to Burkina Faso*

121. In the northern parts of the country, where a military response is imperative and urgent, the national armed forces act almost exclusively in response. They are unable to reassure the population and restore the presence of the State. The south-west of the country is a major challenge for Burkina Faso, as it represents its main link with the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea. The terrorist threat is present there, but for the time being more limited than in the north of the country. It is assessed that the Transition authorities will not succeed in reversing the trend on their own; they are seeking international assistance. Without actions to support the operational commitment of the forces in the North, coupled with medium-term capability development, the security situation can only deteriorate.
122. In view of the urgency, the operational capabilities of the Burkinabe armed forces would need to be rapidly strengthened. Support to the operational commitment through the provision of a “train, equip and accompany” package benefitting specialized units such as Light Reconnaissance and Intervention Units (ULRI) or the tactical intelligence battalion, on the model of Task Force Gazelle, has been requested by Burkinabe armed forces during discussions at technical level. To implement the three pillars of a ‘train, equip and accompany’ model, the approach could be similar to the one proposed for Niger. As a first step, the relocation of one heavy combined mobile advisory and training team from Mali could represent a solution for the training part if the political conditions to act are met soon.
123. However, the political environment in Burkina Faso is currently not suitable for such CSPD action for the time being. In the meantime, the authorities regularly expressed their willingness to diversify their cooperation in the defence and security domain. Burkina Faso sent a high level military delegation to Mali mid-April 2022 to discuss with the authorities. The exact content of the discussions remain unknown, but a communiqué declared the willingness of the two countries to cooperate further in the fight against terrorism. In the current environment, the possibility of a replication of the Malian model and the use of Russia-affiliated forces cannot be ruled out. If the EU is willing to provide an alternative offer, it should be ambitious and bold enough to convince Burkinabe to renounce to other partnerships, engage at high-level as soon as possible and ensure that the right political condition materialise.

124. To better assess the needs and pave the way for a possible EU response, EUTM Mali should immediately reinforce its presence in Burkina Faso to liaise with the military authorities, confirm the EU willingness to support them and under which conditions it would be possible, and inform the political and strategic planning process if the development of a Crisis Management Concept is required.
125. The possibilities for a civilian CSDP support to Burkina Faso will be explored in the Strategic Review for EUCAP Sahel Niger presented in June.

c) Possible military CSDP architecture in the Sahel

126. Three options are proposed for the future military CSDP architecture in the Sahel:
- a. **Continue with the regional role of EUTM Mali**, while deploying permanently to Burkina Faso, if conditions allow, and/or Niger;
 - b. **Create a new EU Military Mission for the Sahel** providing a regional common legal framework, commanding and coordinating all the military CSDP activities in the region through several components, each one dedicated to a specific country. This EU Military Mission for the Sahel could be based in the region;
 - c. **Establish dedicated EU Military Missions in each country**: Focus EUTM Mali on its core Malian mandate, while new CSDP military Missions would be established in Niger as a priority and in Burkina Faso if conditions allow.
127. Option a is built upon the existing legal framework which could be temporarily maintained even if the mission cannot operate in Mali anymore, thereby granting some kind of resilience, but this would not be sustainable for a long period of time. The acceptability of EUTM Mali for regional partners is rather limited, as indicated by the Nigerien authorities notably. Many of the challenges that the Mission is facing in regionalising some of its activities would remain due to the centralisation of the chain of command, despite permanent deployments. It would also requires the negotiation of full-fledged SOMAs to consolidate the current legal basis to operate in Niger and Burkina Faso. The effectiveness of this solution is deemed as limited.
128. Option b would reinforce the flexibility and the sustainability of the CSDP military presence in the Sahel by facilitating the pooling of scarce resources between the different components.

Additional components could easily be created for specific purposes or other countries if the mandate of the mission is broad enough. It would however create an additional layer in the chain of command, partly redundant with the MPCC and the command and control relationship would have to be fine-tuned to give enough autonomy and responsibility to the components' commander to preserve the flexibility and avoid over centralization for matters such as contracting for example. It would require the establishment of new legal frameworks and the implementation of a full planning process. To avoid renegotiating a SOMA with Malian authorities, this option would require maintaining EUTM Mali to operate in this country.

129. Option c would preserve the EU freedom of action in case of a cessation of activities in Mali (absence of legal dependence of CSDP missions in Niger and Burkina Faso from EUTM Mali), but requires the establishment of a new legal framework and the implementation of a full planning process for each new mission. It significantly reinforces the resilience of EU CSDP presence in the Sahel region. Drawing lessons from the current regionalization process, it would facilitate the implementation of a partnership-based approach. Dedicated missions will be built around bespoke objectives according to each country requirements. The presence of a local Mission Force Commander will increase the buy-in of the national authorities and reinforce mutual accountability. It will also allow to tailor each mission structure to its activities and maximize its efficiency. To avoid duplication of efforts and to pool scarce resources when possible, a liaison mechanism between the different missions would be put in place and MPCC, in its role of operational headquarters, will coordinate activities.
130. An agreement on the overall military CSDP architecture to be put in place will be required for the establishment of a new CSDP action in the region. The Crisis Management Concept for a possible military CSDP action in Niger will address the issue.

X. POSSIBLE BLUEPRINT FOR A CSDP ENGAGEMENT IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

131. To prevent the growing spillover of instability towards the Gulf of Guinea, there is a need to develop the capacities of the countries of the Southern Sahel-Saharan strip to fight terrorism in line with various requests received from several Heads of States for support to the operationalisation of the Accra Initiative and defence capacity building, with a specific focus on intelligence. PSC requested the exploration of a possible tailored military CSDP support to

address the needs of these coastal states. Based on the Sahel lessons learned, the framework for this engagement must be flexible, pragmatic, and innovative, and allow for rapid action. It must also complement all the EU available tools has within an Integrated Approach, ensuring coordination with other security actions (EPF), political engagement, development, humanitarian, and economic cooperation. It must also be based upon locally driven structures (such as the Accra Initiative), regular dialogue at country-level and formal requests from beneficiary countries.

132. The objective is to respond to specific needs identified and expressed by the partners. A CSDP engagement will require a network of expertise in the coastal state dealing with requests as well as monitoring implementation, ensuring continuity between the different actions and eventually assessing their impact in order to feed an evaluation cycle. A central structure would also be required to prioritise requests, coordinate a possible European response with other actors in the region and then generate, finance and deploy teams capable of meeting the needs expressed.

a) Creation of a network of expertise in the GoG costal states

133. Expertise to address the local needs already exists in the Gulf of Guinea States, through the defence attachés within the Member States embassies, and could therefore be used immediately. In parallel, it would be interesting to strengthen the security and defence analysis capabilities of the EU Delegations with additional expertise. It could be done either through the CSDP engagement with one active duty officer providing defence expertise, or through the deployment of military advisors in EU Delegations, which would be in line with the objectives included in the Strategic Compass. The experts would monitor actions over time and enhance the coherence of the different EU instruments in the field of security and defence.

b) A central structure and training teams for the coastal states

134. The **central structure** would ensure command of the whole mechanism. Acting as *a command and coordinating unit* with the partners present in the area, it could either be deployed in the area and have a permanent pool of instructors to be able to respond as quickly as possible to emerging needs, or act from outside the area and generate training teams on

request, in conjunction with the Member States. It would also be responsible for the deployment and support of the training teams.

c) ***Recommended way forward for a CSDP engagement in the Gulf of Guinea***

135. In order to initiate activities as soon as possible, a limited footprint in one identified coastal state complemented with on call trainers would allow for quick training or advice delivery while allowing to build bespoke solutions for specific request.
136. This military CSDP engagement could be complemented later with a civilian one, if need arise.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended **for both Missions**:

- a. To temporally and reversibly suspend all operational training activities benefiting to the MAF, National Guard and National Gendarmerie. Maintain the necessary capacity to conduct contingency planning for a redeployment and reestablishment of operational training activities, if so agreed by PSC;
- b. To further monitor and assess the respect for international standards with regard to Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law by MDSF during their operations, as well as the judicial follow up of violations already reported to the Malian government by MINUSMA, as much as possible, within the framework of the current political scenario and limitations;
- c. To monitor and assess the extension of Russia and Russia-affiliated forces involvement with MDSF as well as their presence in the MDSF training establishments and associated infrastructures;
- d. To monitor the Russia-backed disinformation campaign and to enhance the Missions' strategic communication efforts, especially vis-à-vis the local population and international media, in particular to expose and denounce Russia-affiliated forces' behaviour and to counter disinformation, foster EU values and promote EU action, in line with an overarching EEAS strategic communication campaign;
- e. To continue to mainstream International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, into all their activities. Protection of Civilians affected by armed conflicts (PoC), gender equality and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, as well as the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda are matters that should be systematically addressed in all activities, as well as

the respect for the principle of Rule of Law, the preservation of cultural heritage and climate sensitivity;

- f. To increase their coordination, including with the EU Delegation and relevant international partners, especially MINUSMA, on all of these aspects with a view to promoting civilian-military cooperation.

For EUTM Mali:

- g. To maintain the current duration of EUTM Mali mandate (until 23 May 2024)
- h. Regarding its first strategic objective, to focus the Mission on the provision of strategic advice and education, with the following objectives:
- Provide strategic advice to Mali's Ministry of Defence and General Staff to improve their functioning in all relevant domains in order to support the creation of sustainable and capable armed forces under a democratic control, in line with international standards in terms of Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and gender equality;
 - Participate to the education of NCO and officers in the field of Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, protection of civilian, gender aspects and child protection as well as leadership and to provide advice to training establishments for the MAF NCO's and officers in order to create a capable leadership education system;
 - Provide training to the MAF only in non-operational domains, including Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, protection of civilian, gender aspects and child protection.
- i. Regarding its second strategic objective, to focus the mission on the G5 Sahel Joint Force pending on its future:
- Continue to support and advise the PCIAT in Bamako, including regarding structural reforms;
 - Continue to support the pre-deployment training of the PCIAT and the sector headquarters;
 - If dedicated CSDP actions are established in Niger and Burkina Faso, hand over activities in these countries and focus on ensuring appropriate liaison on G5 Sahel JF related issues.

j. In addition EUTM Mali is tasked to:

- Establish the situational picture on MAF and their actions in order to enhance EU reactivity if support is requested by Malian authorities and respective preconditions are met;
- Liaise with Burkinabe military authorities through a permanent presence in Burkina Faso to explore possible areas of cooperation and pave the way for the establishment and the launching of a new CSDP missions if conditions allow.

k. Adapt the structure of the mission accordingly.

For EUCAP Sahel Mali:

- l. Extend the mandate of EUCAP Sahel Mali for two years (including the RACC), as part of the overall EU effort in Mali.
- m. Maintain EUCAP Sahel Mali's mandate, while modifying its fourth strategic objective, which should become: "facilitating the redeployment of the ISF to the Centre and their deployment to the South of Mali".
- n. Regarding the fourth strategic objective, to suspend the facilitation of the redeployment of the ISF to the Centre until PSC decides otherwise.
- o. As regards the National Guard, focus on activities contributing to a better governance of the forces.
- p. As regards the National Gendarmerie revise the mission activities on the following basis:
 - focus on activities contributing to a better governance of the forces;
 - Continue to further develop accountability mechanisms and activities in the field of fight against impunity and awareness raising on human rights, notably through the further operationalisation of the Prévôté Department, and military justice;
 - Keep the train the trainer approach and accompaniment in the field of specialised training on investigation topics (such as forensics, criminal investigation).

q. As regard the National Police strengthen the mission activities as following:

- Enhance the capacities to strengthen the regional security including capability to fight against transnational organized crime (drugs, firearms and cultural properties trafficking, environmental criminality), terrorism and illegal migration, as well as forensics;
- Keep the train the trainer approach and accompaniment in the field of specialised training on investigation topics (such as forensics, criminal investigation).

r. Adapt the structure of the mission accordingly. At this stage, no additional financial resources seem necessary to cover the reorientation of the mandate of EUCAP SAHEL Mali and the budget for EUCAP SAHEL Mali (including the RACC) is estimated at EUR 88M pending of the availability of budgetary resources.

For Niger: Develop a Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP military mission in Niger, which will define the regional military CSDP architecture.

For Burkina Faso: Continue exploring possible areas of cooperation with the Burkinabe authorities with a view to developing a Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP military mission in Burkina Faso, once conditions are met.

For the Gulf of Guinea: Further develop the recommended blueprint for a CSDP engagement in the Gulf of Guinea with a view to developing a Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP action in the Gulf of Guinea.

XII. PLANNING PROCESS – NEXT STEPS

137. It is recommended that the PSC agrees to extend the EUCAP Sahel Mali mandate for two years, and to amend the two Missions' mandate in line with the objectives and tasks herein contained.
138. Revised Council Decisions will be required to extend the EUCAP Sahel Mali (including RACC) for two years and revise the two Missions' mandates according to the above recommendations.
139. Technically extend EUCAP Sahel Niger mandate for two months and have the SR presented in PSC no later than end of June 2022.

140. It is recommended that the PSC invites the EEAS to develop a Crisis Management Concept for a possible CSDP military mission in Niger, to further develop the possible models for a CSDP action in the Gulf of Guinea and to further explore the possibilities for a CSDP military mission in Burkina Faso, if conditions allow.

141. It is recommended that the PSC

- Agrees on the findings in the Holistic Strategic Review;
- Invites the PMG/CIVCOM to provide its recommendations on this HSR;
- Invites the EUMC to provide its military advice on the recommendations for EUTM Mali.

ANNEX A

OVERVIEW OF EU ACTIONS IN MALI

I. POLITICAL ACTION

1. The EU has been supporting the primary political role played by ECOWAS since the very beginning of the Malian political crisis. An EU-27 Declaration issued on 2 October 2021 affirmed a strong support to the ECOWAS' position expressed during the 16 September 2021 Heads of state summit: importance of organizing elections; warning against the use of Wagner; considering targeted measures against persons obstructing the implementation of the Transition.
2. The Council decided on 4 February to impose restrictive measures on five individuals responsible for actions that obstruct and undermine the successful completion of the political transition of Mali. They are all members of the Transition authorities and involved in the current transition process; some of them have also been involved in the August 2020 coup d'état. In addition, on 13 December 2021, the Council has imposed sanctions against the Wagner Group and eight individuals and three entities connected to it.
3. As the political and security environment in Mali further degraded, HRVP requested formal guarantees regarding the full functioning of the CSDP missions and the absence of interference of Russia-affiliated forces with the support provided to Mali by the EU on 07 March. The Malian answer to this request, on 21 March, was deemed as insufficient and led to the decision to temporarily and reversibly suspend some training activities of both CSDP missions as well as part of the assistance measures under the European Peace Facility benefitting the MAF.

II. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, BUDGET AND PROJECT SUPPORT

4. For the period 2014-2020, the bilateral envelope for Mali financed by the 11th EDF totalled more than €600 million. Budgetary support represented nearly 70% of these funds. This has been complemented by support measures for civil society, and accompanying measures benefiting local actors including for the protection of human rights and international humanitarian law. Mali also benefits from projects financed by the Emergency Trust Fund for

Africa, to the tune of nearly €238.6 million. to support the resilience of the population, improve governance, create jobs and economic opportunities, and better manage migration.

5. The EU and the Member States present in Mali have developed a joint programme up to 2024 which defines common objectives in order to orient development actions in Mali and strengthen their impact. The aim of this programming is to contribute to the restoration of the Malian social contract through three axes (i) better functioning of the State, (ii) sustainable economic growth, (iii) development of human capital. Programming under the NDICI - Global Europe for the period 2021-2027 is aligned with the joint programming, with 3 priority areas : 1) "Improving the functioning of the State"; 2) "Creation of jobs promoting the green economy"; and 3) "Meeting basic human needs".
6. Following the second coup d'état in May 2021, the EU maintained development cooperation programmes directly benefiting vulnerable populations and continued to support efforts to mitigate the health, humanitarian and economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis in Mali. Programmes in support to Malian Defence and Security Forces are being carefully screened— notably with respect to the interactions with the Russia-affiliated forces (under EU restrictive measures). Coherence is being ensured vis-à-vis the approach followed for the CSDP missions and EPF measures since April 2022, with the decision to temporarily and reversibly suspend APF-funded material and logistic support to the benefit of the Malian battalions of the G5 Joint Force. Budget support programmes are not being implemented at this time.
7. The EU's crisis response engagement remains mobilised to support stability and peace in Mali (€23,5M) through peacebuilding, dialogue, mediation and stabilisation initiatives, including provisions under the Capacity building in support of development and security for development (CBSD/CBDSD). Activities aim to support the political transition (€3M) and the implementation of the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel (P3S) in Mali (€15,5M). Specific emphasis is put on the return of the Malian administration in vulnerable areas, on support to the return of justice and the fight against impunity in central Mali and strengthening the role of civil society in preventing violent extremism in vulnerable areas. The EU supports also the follow-up of the Alger peace agreement notably through financial support to the Comité de Suivi de l'Accord pour la paix et la réconciliation au Mali and the return of the Malian state presence in Kidal and north region, (CBSD project) (€3.5M). In

addition, the EU supports peacebuilding and strengthening of social cohesion in Central Mali (€1,5M). Crisis response actions also contributed to support the ‘civilian surge’ agreed by the Coalition for the Sahel with a dedicated action: Support for Stabilisation in Liptako-Gourma (€12 million) implemented by UNDP. It aims to stabilise the Liptako-Gourma region (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger).

8. Due to the political situation, all crisis response activities engaged in Mali are closely monitored by the regional team in Dakar in close coordination with the EU delegations and the EEAS services. The CBSD project in Kidal has been suspended given the recent development.

III. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

9. Funding for humanitarian aid remains more essential than ever. In 2021, EUR 36.5M has been allocated by the EU to humanitarian aid in Mali. At the end of March 2022, 35.5 MEUR have already been mobilised and are in the process of being contracted. The main priority is to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict, in particular the forcibly displaced population. This assistance includes health and nutrition, education, protection, rapid multisectoral assistance to forcibly displaced people, humanitarian air service and coordination. Humanitarian actors on the ground are nevertheless directly exposed to the growing violence in these conflict zones, and humanitarian access is under increasing constraints.

IV. ASSISTANCE MEASURES UNDER THE EPF

10. An assistance measure under the European Peace Facility (EPF) in support of the Malian Armed Forces was adopted on 2 December 2021. It aims at contributing to building the capacity of the Malian Armed Forces to conduct military operations to restore Mali's territorial integrity and reduce the threat posed by terrorist groups. This should contribute to a stronger presence of state services in remote areas and lead to better protection of civilians through the provision of training and equipment. This assistance measure is non-lethal in nature. The support was planned for three projects: i) support to the NCO Academy in Banankoro; ii) improvement of the training infrastructure in Sévaré; iii) equipping three companies of the 23rd Regiment of the Mopti-Sevare military region to the standards of the

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Light Reconnaissance and Intervention Units (ULRI). The financial reference amount is €24 million.

11. This bilateral EPF assistance measure has been temporarily and reversibly suspended, except for Banankoro and the delivery of individual protective gears. The Malian component of the EPF action in support of G5 Sahel is also suspended.
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