

SPEECH

by

COMMISSIONER JUTTA URPILAINEN

at

General Assembly of Sahel Alliance

N'Djaména, 15 February 2021

Minister González,

Minister Kane,

Minister Müller,

Minister Le Drian

Members of the General Assembly of the Sahel,

Dear colleagues and friends,

I am glad to be at today's General Assembly – an occasion also marking three successful years of coordination and cooperation under the Sahel Alliance.

My thanks to Minister González for Spain's commitment under its Presidency to making cooperation aid more impactful and for your special emphasis on women and youth.

As we look to the future, let me make three brief points on how we move forward and deliver collectively for the people of the Sahel.

Firstly, while recognising recent successes in containing security threats, security and stability can only be sustainable if there is a broad and multi-form deployment of the State.

For this to happen effectively, a stronger mutual commitment and accountability with governments of the G5 Sahel is necessary. The key element of which is political ownership and willingness to strengthen institutional capacity and integrity, ensure legitimacy, acceptance and rebuild trust with local communities.

Only then can transformative change in people's lives, including those living in the most remote areas, really happen.

The deployment and redeployment of state authorities, including their representatives and defence and security forces, must happen alongside a clear commitment to fight impunity and respect human rights. Hence, the importance of working hand in hand with the justice system, and make it effective.

Secondly, trust will very much be re-built if the population can access basic services: education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation systems. This will give them a reason to go back to a ‘State order’, rather than to a ‘non-State disorder’.

Provided this political commitment is evident, the EU is ready to support the G5 States in this deployment.

Our focus will especially be on fragile areas promoting an “Integrated Territorial Approach”, bringing back the full package to the benefit of local populations.

Third and final point.

Bringing peace and stability to the Sahel will not happen if women and youth are left behind.

So there must special emphasis on these groups. Especially in relation to their access to education, training and employment.

We also need to look at how we ramp up investment in human and economic development. And I am happy to see that our side-event on the private sector was successful.

Dear colleagues,

Addressing security and development challenges in the Sahel is a top priority for the EU.

And we will continue to coordinate with international partners, including through the Sahel Alliance, to meet these goals and ensure the long-term well-being of local populations.

(409 words)