

## **Declaration of the Alliance Sahel on the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security - in the Sahel**

**14 December 2020** - *The Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, in her capacity as President of the General Assembly of the Alliance Sahel, makes the following statement today:*

The Sahelian populations face multiple crises and conflicts. Insecurity, poverty, demographic pressures or climate change, to name but a few, make many Sahelians feel excluded from development, especially the most vulnerable. Women and girls do not enjoy full access to their rights to participate in society in all their dimensions, whether social, economic, cultural or political. They are subject to various forms of violence and discrimination. The region continues to record some of the lowest gender indicators in the world in many areas (education, health, economy, access to land and justice, gender-based violence). In addition, the deteriorating security situation and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the greater impact that shocks have on women and girls.

The year 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security. It highlights the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls in the Sahel and the necessary commitment of Sahelian countries to protecting them. It stresses that women are stakeholders in building sustainable peace, both at the local level within communities and at the national level in decision-making bodies. It recalls the obligation of States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for sexual violence and abuses. It calls for the systematisation of a gender equality and gender-sensitive approach and stresses the importance of including women's voices, capacities and initiatives in conflict prevention, resolution, mediation and peacebuilding.

The Alliance Sahel has decided to focus its efforts in six priority areas, which form the basis of its engagement in the Sahel. These pillars intersect strongly with gender equality and the rights of women and girls. By adopting the Alliance Sahel's Gender Road Map in 2019, members have committed to strengthening dialogue with their partners on this cross-cutting theme, in order to better integrate gender concerns and issues. They also undertook efforts to set up projects and programmes dedicated to gender and to advocate at the political level for a better recognition of the rights of women and girls.

There is an urgent need to scale up efforts to accelerate the implementation in the Sahel of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security to advance gender equality. Despite the essential role played by women in mediation, advocacy and conflict management, the level of women's empowerment and political representation in the G5 Sahel countries remains low. There is an acute need to

continue to mobilise in order to uphold the rights of women and girls, to promote their role in peace operations, security missions, peace processes and political transitions, and to empower them to achieve equal representation and power in decision-making processes and fora.

The members of the Alliance Sahel are strongly mobilised to respond to these challenges and to strengthen the integration of the UNSCR 1325 agenda in its political messages. In particular, we commit ourselves to:

- 1. Increase the number of projects and programmes that target gender equality, the promotion and protection of the rights and empowerment of women and girls, and to improve accountability thereof.** Of all Alliance Sahel projects underway in 2018, more than half (59%) were unable to provide information on gender mainstreaming. Of the 262 projects for which data are available, 70% are gender mainstreaming or have as their primary objective to improve gender equality.
- 2. Support countries and the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat in their efforts to adopt a propitious institutional and legal framework and proactive policies to promote effective gender equality and protect the rights of women and girls.** Identify obstacles to effective gender equality and address them in the main fora of dialogue of the Alliance Sahel with its partners, drawing in particular on initiatives such as the G5 Sahel Women's Platform. Support the adoption and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of the resolutions and the women-peace-security agenda.
- 3. Strengthen partnerships, both amongst Alliance Sahel members and with national partners, local stakeholders and civil society organisations,** to improve collective understanding of gender equality issues and challenges, to strengthen the integration of the women-peace-security agenda, UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions, to ensure better coordination of public policies, sectoral reforms, and implemented projects on the ground.

**A concrete mobilisation** - Presentation of some emblematic projects aimed at improving gender equality, financed by members of the Alliance Sahel in the G5 countries:

- **In Burkina Faso**, the project "*Empowerment, access to sexual and reproductive health and better involvement of vulnerable women and young people in environmental protection and conflict prevention and management*", funded by Luxembourg to the tune of 5 million Euros, promotes the empowerment of vulnerable/marginalised women and adolescents, the respect of their sexual and reproductive health rights, their involvement in environmental protection and the prevention and peaceful management of conflicts.
- **In Mauritania**, the project "*Strengthening the capacity of the Mauritanian police force to deal with gender-based violence (GBV)*", funded by the Spanish cooperation agency (AECID), works with the police force (especially the minors' brigade) to raise awareness of forms of GBV (especially sexual) and improve the procedures for its handling. The project has strengthened the police's capacity to provide an adequate response to victims and to improve institutional collaboration with health services for their medical care. A GBV prevention plan, with the involvement of key stakeholders for the protection of rights (local authorities, justice and police personnel, civil society) was also developed, as well as a communication plan to reinforce the social de-stigmatisation of victims.
- **In Chad**, the three phases of the project "*Improving children's chances of survival and development*", funded by the German Development Cooperation to the tune of 33 million Euros, are helping to reduce maternal and infant mortality by improving the quality of health services and raising awareness among pregnant and breastfeeding women of the need to use them.
- **In Niger and Chad**, the project "*Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery of Lake Chad*" (co-financed to the tune of 36 million Euros by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the European Union, with a contribution of 500 000 Euros by the United Kingdom specifically dedicated to gender), which aims in particular to support a sustainable local economy and strengthen social cohesion, takes into account the gender dimension in all its components to meet the specific needs of women and girls.
- **In Mali, Niger and Chad**, the project "*Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable Women*", funded by the African Development Bank, aims to improve access to economic resources for women and young women and to strengthen the economic resilience of households in areas affected by violence. The project finances income-generating activities (in agriculture, livestock, trade and handicrafts), strengthens women's entrepreneurial capacities and reinforces policy dialogue in order to create an environment conducive to the reduction of gender disparities in access to economic resources.