

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me begin by expressing Denmark's appreciation of the efforts of Spain in the capacity as President of the General Assembly.

You have led our Alliance through a difficult period. And your willingness to take on the task and the responsibility of leading the work of our Alliance is highly valued.

The situation in the Sahel remains deeply concerning. This General Assembly is therefore a timely opportunity for us to discuss these common challenges.

The political crises in Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad add to the mounting challenges in the region. We are alarmed by the democratic backsliding. While we maintain pressure for the return to democracy and constitutional order, we must continue our commitment to the peoples of the Sahel. The needs are as urgent as ever. Among others In terms of governance, human rights, climate change, gender equality, youth and education. However, working conditions are extremely challenging for all of us – the partners of the Sahel Alliance.

And the security situation is very precarious. Just now, Denmark follows with immense concern the numerous and very serious reports of large numbers of civilians summarily killed in Mourah in Mali. Our thoughts are with the families and relatives of the victims.

We continue our work supporting civil society and local populations in the Sahel, but it gets increasingly difficult to operate. Consequently, Denmark has made some adjustments, and we are still looking into consequences for our

engagement in the Sahel. On the development side, we have temporarily suspended all projects related to the central governments in Mali and Burkina Faso.

At the same time, we find ourselves in an extraordinary situation in Europe. As a consequence of the war in Ukraine, Denmark expects to receive a large number of refugees. Against this background, the Danish government has had to make some difficult choices and reprioritise funds. This will affect a number of planned projects and programmes this year – including in the Sahel. While Denmark is rescaling our presence and reevaluating our partnerships, our commitment to the region remains.

In our alliance, we face a crossroads. The conditions for our work have changed, and our room for manoeuvre is increasingly restricted. Our key partner, the G5 Sahel, is going through a very difficult moment. Without a strong regional partner to ensure regional leadership and ownership, we need to adapt our development cooperation.

Let me conclude by underling that we believe that coordination and a strengthened collaboration are more important than ever. We want to confirm that we see the Alliance as central in that regard. However, we must reassess the way we work and the adapted role of the Alliance.

Thank you.

\*\*\*