

Anförande – Sahelalliansens generalförsamlingsmöte

- Let me begin by thanking the Spanish presidency for hosting this important meeting. I also want to thank the Sahel alliance's coordination unit, in particular for the guidance and support you have provided us in the accession process and as a new member to the Alliance. We are very excited to join the Sahel Alliance and look forward to a productive cooperation with all partners.
- Sweden has a broad and substantial engagement in the region. In addition to our contributions to Minusma and EU's CSDP-missions, Sweden is engaged in the Sahel through humanitarian aid as well as development cooperation. We have bilateral strategies for development cooperation with Mali and Burkina Faso, and embassies in Bamako and Ouagadougou. At the regional level, development funding is administered mainly through our regional strategy for Africa and includes, among other things, our support to the Joint Programme for Cross-border cooperation in Liptako-Gourma.
- Our thematic priorities include human rights and gender equality, democracy and good governance, environmental sustainability and climate change, as well as conflict prevention. We believe these topics are as important as ever, and we remain fully committed to continue supporting the Sahelian people and their rights to sustainable security and development.
- At the same time, we – like many others – see a clear need to reassess the modalities of the engagement in light of the democratic backsliding and recent military take-overs in some of the region's countries. It will be an important task for the Sahel Alliance to contribute to strengthening democratic norms and institutions, while continuing to insist on a swift return to constitutional order in Burkina Faso, Mali and Tchad. We believe ECOWAS is an important partner in this endeavour.
- It is also important that respect for human rights be placed front and center of our engagement in the Sahel. Particular attention must be paid to women and girls, including their rights to political and economic participation as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Addressing the impacts of climate change and enhancing the resilience of local communities will be critical. Moving forward, we must also pay increasing attention to the nexus between climate change and conflict.
- Finally, we firmly believe that security, human rights and sustainable development must go hand in hand. Short-term stabilization efforts and humanitarian support must be complemented by longer-term efforts aimed at addressing root causes to instability. As an integral part to the Sahel Coalition, the Alliance plays a critical role in ensuring a more balanced and holistic approach to the region's challenges, as well as in ensuring close cooperation with partners in the region – regional ownership is critical to achieve sustainable results.
- So once again, thank you, and we look forward to a fruitful and impactful collaboration with you all.