

Remarks for the Sahel Alliance General Assembly 2022

The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (TBI)

Maggie Janes-Lucas, Regional Director – Sahel

4 April 2022, Madrid, Spain

Minister Albares, Chairperson of the General Assembly,

Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Special Envoys and Ambassadors,

Members of the Sahel Alliance,

Colleagues and friends,

I am pleased to be here today at the third General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance. Thank you to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the European Union, and Cooperation of Spain for hosting this important and timely meeting. Thank you also to the Spanish delegation and to the Sahel Alliance Secretariate for your leadership and coordination. It is a pleasure to meet you all in person and to see how the Alliance was able to overcome the difficulties posed by the pandemic. As the Sahel Regional Director and representative of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change in the Sahel Alliance, we are honoured to be among you today to reaffirm our commitment to the Sahel.

We know, all too well, that security threats are increasing, and that they are expanding beyond the Sahel into neighbouring countries - they have been for years. We also know that the solutions to the crisis in the Sahel must be found and realized *in* the Sahel with foundational support from us - its development, diplomatic and political partners. The Sahel Alliance has an opportunity and an obligation to effectively cooperate and coordinate our efforts. This can provide

a foundational base to sustain governments and leaders to realise viable solutions to the multidimensional, protracted crises affecting our Sahelian colleagues for far too long.

To play this role, the international community must step-up and work with a broad range of new and existing stakeholders beyond the borders of what is typically classified as “The Sahel”, including reinforcing cooperation, programmatic and policy reform lessons learnt with coastal countries and regional organisations. By acting in synergy, the Coalition for the Sahel and the Sahel Alliance can respond to a crisis that requires security, humanitarian, and development interventions, at all levels.

In this complex time, we must be the partners that the G5 countries look to - for support, accompaniment, and guidance to respond to recurring crises that require sustained country-owned responses. This support is built on our values of respect for human rights and rule of law, and it allows for new and innovative responses, differentiating us from other actors that will not adapt with our stakeholders in country and those who will not provide long-term solutions.

We are also aware that security interventions will not be enough. Long-term stability in the region can be reached only if the social pact is rebuilt between the G5 countries and their citizens. Over the last year and more, we have witnessed how the deterioration of trust between citizens and the State can have dramatic repercussions. A strong relationship can exist only if mutually

reinforcing systems and accountability are valued and governments continue the difficult day-to-day work that achieves results for their populations. We stand with the populations of the G5 and support solutions that will respond to their needs and progress.

We believe that a change in the international rhetoric around the Sahel is needed. The Covid-19 pandemic, population growth, and climate change have further destabilized a context marked by poverty and instability. But the Sahel is much more than that. Acknowledging the importance of a security response to the crisis must not prevent us from recognising the untapped potential of the Sahel. We must recognise and support the enormous potential of the youth, as well as the opportunities of making the Sahel a solar power house which can serve both to expand access to energy for its own populations and also as a driving force for renewable energy expansion in the wider West Africa region. Paving the way and supporting governments to build a foundation in these areas will allow emerging talent, innovation, and development to flourish. We have a role to use our vast resources here in this room to nurture and foster these opportunities to benefit the Sahel and allow Sahelian leaders and populations to push change. The potential is limitless.

We, the international community, and stakeholders of the countries of the G5, have a responsibility to act and counter the effects of this multidimensional crisis before it is too late. Despite our efforts, we see that much is still to be done. We cannot allow the various global crises to deflect our attention and the great ongoing need from the Sahel now, or we risk backsliding and losing the gains made. The commitment of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change in the Sahel

remains firm in support of the region and its stability, progress and development. In cooperation with the Sahel Alliance, we will continue our mission to collaborate with Sahelian leaders to face the development and security challenges they identify and seek to solve.

[Information on The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change \(TBI\)](#)

TBI is different and complementary to the objectives of the Sahel Alliance member agencies and most importantly, to our colleagues from the Sahel. TBI's work is focused first and foremost on supporting governments to achieve their own priorities – we are motivated to make globalisation work for all and to address the most challenging issues of our time. By shaping the debate and offering expert advice, we aim to help governments and leaders build open, inclusive, and prosperous societies in an increasingly interconnected world. Our strength lies in our experience and expertise, and our global perspective. Through Tony Blair, and our panel of experts, we're able to offer unique insight, as well peer-to-peer practical support, to leaders and governments keen and ready to implement this kind of change. We do this because we believe in the power of governments to know what they need themselves, and we want to help identify, and support actions for solutions - together.