

Press Release

Sahel Alliance members pledge to stay engaged in the Sahel region

Berlin, July 16, 2024 – In a spirit of listening and dialogue, over 150 representatives of more than 30 countries and international organizations met in Berlin on July 16th, 2024, for the Alliance's 5th General Assembly. The meeting was also attended by Sahelian Authorities.

In his statement, Abdessalam Ould Mohamed Saleh, Mauritanian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, reminded the audience that the Sahel continues to face complex and multiple challenges affecting peace, security and Development. He also underlined the importance of continuous engagement and international support to help the population of the region in addressing food security and building resilience in the face of climate change and refugee crises.

During the General Assembly, Sahel Alliance members reiterated their collective commitment to addressing the region's development priorities. **Despite the complexity of the situation in the region, members expressed their willingness to remain engaged and committed for the long-term to the people of the Sahel countries, with a particular emphasis on youth.**

In this context, Alliance members ensure funding for development projects, totalling almost 23 billion euros¹, with "Education, employment and youth" identified as an important intervention sector. From 2017 to 2022, thanks to the support of the SA members, **22.5 million** persons received **livelihood support and/or food assistance**, **8 million** persons gained improved access to **drinking water** supply services and more than **5 million children** were **vaccinated**. **Furthermore, 1.5 million persons** received vocational training and/or skills development courses.

The 5th General Assembly was chaired by German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Svenja Schulze. In her opening speech, Minister Schulze stressed that *"since the last General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance, held in Nouakchott last July, the region has seen profound political changes and the challenges in the region continue to be enormous: climate change, governance, unemployment, terrorism and desertification. Throughout the region, I have seen that our support reaches the people. Every person that gets education, that knows how to better adapt to climate change, that can feed his or her family, is worth all our efforts. I am convinced that, in these challenging times, it is especially important to continue our engagement and dialogue. In my second term as President of the Sahel Alliance I especially want to listen to the young generation in the Sahel region and focus on improving education and training for young people there."*

Priorities reaffirmed and new initiatives

In a concerted effort to enhance their impact at scale, Sahel Alliance members are currently working to advance joint initiatives centred on three strategic priorities*:

- (1) creating employment and revenue opportunities for youth through education, training, skills development, and entrepreneurship;
- (2) building resilience to shocks, in

¹ Total commitment of ongoing SA-labeled projects as of 31/12/2023

particular through social protection, ecosystems restoration, and food security; (3) promoting territorial development and access to basic services.

A new partnership between the World Bank and Germany has been created to mobilize resources for the regional joint initiative RELANCE in support of education and skills development.

“The complexity and urgency of the challenges facing the Sahel require meaningful collaboration among development partners and other key stakeholders,” said Ousmane Diagana, World Bank Regional Vice-President for Western and Central Africa, recognizing the transformative power of partnership when new ideas, perspectives and experiences are combined with the necessary financial resources. *“Collectively, we need to innovate and step-up our efforts to sustain development gains, build the resilience of populations, and take them out of extreme poverty in a liveable Sahel.”*

Sahel Alliance members also welcomed the establishment of the Sahel and West African Coastal Countries Umbrella Trust Fund, which will serve as a new financing vehicle to support joint initiatives and coordinated approaches. Further endeavours are underway to pursue other joint initiatives, in particular on shock resilience.

After the General assembly, in the afternoon, an exchange was organized with civil society organizations and local governments from the Sahel countries. Sahel Alliance members acknowledge the vital role of civil society organizations (CSOs) and local actors in promoting peace, development, and social cohesion in the Sahel region. They reaffirm their commitment to strengthening partnerships with CSOs and supporting their efforts to empower communities and promote human rights.

At the conclusion of the Assembly, the Assembly confirmed the German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development for a second year as President of the Sahel Alliance General Assembly, and, similarly, ratified the mandate of the World Bank Vice-President for West and Central Africa at the presidency of the Operational Steering Committee for a third year.

** Those 3 priorities have been reconfirmed for the coming year.*

RECOMMENDATIONS OF SAHEL ALLIANCE MEMBERS AT THE 5th GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

- 1. Enhance dialogue on the development priorities of the Sahel.**
- 2. Sustain engagement and advance the strategic priorities of the Sahel Alliance through joint initiatives.**
- 3. Recognize the important role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in promoting peace, accountability, and development in the Sahel region.**
- 4. Integrate the spillover of instability from the Sahel to coastal countries in the region into the Sahel Alliance’s strategic thinking.**

Focus on the 5th General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance

Federating the action of 27 bilateral and multilateral development partners (18 full members and 9 observers), the Sahel Alliance is today the main framework for enhanced coordination of development cooperation initiatives in the Sahel. (alliance-sahel.org)

The 5th General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance, chaired by Ms. Svenja Schulze, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, was held in Berlin on July 16th, 2024, with high-level participation from its members and partners.

More information about the 5th General Assembly of the Sahel Alliance: alliance-sahel.org

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