EU-African security cooperation in the Sahel region, West Africa and the Horn of Africa

2020/2002(INI) - 16/09/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 427 votes to 128, with 140 abstentions, a resolution on EU-African security cooperation in the Sahel region, West Africa and the Horn of Africa.

Members stressed the need to establish a strong nexus between security, development, and humanitarian intervention is essential for the sustainable development of the Sahel, West Africa and Horn of Africa regions.

European Union action

Stressing that the African Union and the African States of the region are essential partners of the European Union, Parliament called on the Commission, the Council and the Vice President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to coordinate the development, humanitarian and security strategies in which they are involved as part of an integrated strategy leading to independent African ownership in security and defence affairs.

The resolution welcomed the EU's comprehensive engagement in the Sahel, West Africa and the Horn of Africa and the contribution of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations to peace, security and international stability. It nevertheless stressed the need to: (i) adapt the financial and administrative rules, as well as political decision-making process, in order to increase the speed of and effectiveness of the response to crises; (ii) strengthen CSDP missions and operations, as well as the EU’s overall communication and strategic planning policy, in order to increase the visibility of the EU’s actions.

Parliament welcomed the proposal to create, under the EU's CFSP, an instrument to finance military and defence cooperation with third countries and international organisations. In view of the current situation in Africa, it called on the Council to adopt, without delay, the decision needed to create this new instrument to support the capabilities of African armed forces.

Members called for the format of the EUTM Mali, EUTM CAR and EUTM Somalia training missions to be redefined to better adapt them to the real needs of the armed forces and populations of the beneficiary countries. They also called on the EU to help the G5 Sahel Joint Force, a key instrument in the fight against terrorism, jihadist activities and threats to regional security, to become operational by providing financial assistance. They supported the African Union's intention to send 3000 soldiers to support the G5 Sahel in combating armed groups.

Parliament recognised the important role that Mali plays for the stability of the Sahel and shared the profound concerns regarding the coup d’état in Mali on 18 August 2020. It underlined that continued cooperation with and support from the international community can only be successfully pursued if a number of important steps are taken, namely the setting up of a well-prepared, viable, transparent and enduring electoral system which seeks to safeguard the constitutional rights and freedoms of every citizen.

It expressed support for the EEAS’s efforts to help reach a peaceful and democratic solution that will ultimately restore lasting stability and the confidence of Malian citizens in their institutions and public administration.

Good governance

Parliament stated that there can be no security strategy without joint sustainable development and humanitarian action. Recalling the diverse and deep- root causes of terrorism and armed conflict, it stressed the importance of promoting human capital and development, meeting the needs of the most vulnerable communities, and developing people's resilience.

The resolution stressed that meaningful security cooperation between the EU and Africa must be based on sustainable development, with particular emphasis on:

- the consolidation of democracy by ensuring responsible democratic systems of governance through effective parliamentary scrutiny, democratic institutions and the rule of law, as well as guaranteeing all civil liberties;

- ending conflicts and preventing their recurrence while addressing their root causes;

- the development of youth-oriented policies that promote economic development and the creation of employment opportunities;

- support for preventive stabilisation action plans;

- empowering women through recognition of their role as agents of change in African communities and fostering their role in peace-building, conflict prevention and mediation;

- the provision of basic services, including health, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene, social protection and support to displaced populations, in order to increase citizens' confidence in the state;

- ensuring administrative security and legal stability;

- the eradication of poverty, impunity and corruption;

- tackling the effects of climate change;

- respecting the rule of law and promoting sustainable development and human rights;

- the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices.

Parliament stressed that an integrated approach to peace, security and sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement of local civil society actors. It stressed the importance of partnership with the United Nations, cooperation with other international institutions, including the African Union, and dialogue with other regional organisations.

Recognising the impact of conflict, poverty, inequality and climate change on forced displacement, Members stressed the importance of increasing cooperation between the EU and the Sahel region to address the issue of regular, safe and dignified migration. They also called for extraordinary and holistic assistance to the regions concerned in view of the extraordinary challenge presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lastly, Members called on the Commission to strengthen public diplomacy efforts in order to explain EU security support in Africa more effectively as a contribution to the African development strategy 2063.