



On February 15 and 16, 2013, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Executive Secretariat of the Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel-Saharan Areas of Niger (SDS Sahel Niger), and the Centre for Strategies and Security for the Sahel Sahara (Centre 4S) convened an international seminar on security and development in the Sahel-Sahara in Niamey, Niger. The meeting, opened by Niger Prime Minister Brigi Rafini, brought together approximately eighty participants, including high-level representatives from the United Nations, African Union, and national and regional governments as well as representatives from interested partners, donor countries, civil society, and the media.

This meeting note summarizes the key themes of the seminar and was drafted by Mireille Affa'a-Mindzie, research fellow of IPI's Africa program. The note reflects the rapporteur's interpretation of the meeting and not necessarily the views of all of the participants. IPI owes a debt of gratitude to the International Organisation of La Francophonie (IOF), the governments of Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and its many generous donors whose contributions made this seminar and publication possible.

Introduction

After the severe twin crises that nearly brought Mali to its knees in January 2012, the country is gradually recovering from their debilitating consequences. In August 2013, Mali successfully elected its new president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, thus putting an end to an eighteen-month-long transitional government that was put in place following the March 2012 coup. Even though the violence has abated and renewed hope seems to be in the air, the structural causes of the Malian conflict are still stubbornly present and their consequences are still being felt by neighboring Sahel countries that suffer from similar underlying ills. The situation in Mali and other concerned states in the region generated a renewed interest in the Sahel-Sahara region and in efforts to stabilize this region. This prompted the International Peace Institute, the Executive Secretariat of the Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel-Saharan Areas of Niger (SDS Sahel Niger), and the Centre for Strategies and Security for the Sahel Sahara (Centre 4S) to convene an international seminar on security and development in the Sahel-Sahara on February 15 and 16, 2013, in Niamey, Niger. The seminar aimed to:

- develop a common in-depth understanding of the constantly changing situation in the Sahel-Sahara, whose causes and effects have become increasingly transnational in nature;
- evaluate the current and planned responses to address the crisis and identify ways to make them more effective;
- develop a strategy on how international actors could organize themselves to better support national and regional stakeholders in the search for sustainable solutions to recurring problems affecting this fragile region; and
- build knowledge and share the experience Niger gained through the development and initial implementation of its national Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel-Saharan Areas of Niger.

The meeting was officially opened by Niger Prime Minister Brigi Rafini. It brought together approximately eighty participants, including UN Special Envoy for the Sahel Romano Prodi, African Union (AU) High Representative for Mali and the Sahel Pierre Buyoya, and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa Said Djinnit. Other participants included representatives of the government of Niger; individual country envoys for the Sahel from Norway, Spain, and Switzerland; high-level representatives of regional governments from the Sahel-Sahara and West Africa; representatives from interested partners and donor countries; researchers and analysts from within and outside the region; as well as representatives from civil

society and the media.

This report summarizes the key points that emerged from the meeting, presenting first the main factors that contributed to the pervasive multi-dimensional problems in the Sahel-Sahara Region. Second, the report considers the response strategies that were developed or implemented by institutions at international, regional, and national levels. Third, the report identifies key policy measures for addressing the crisis. Finally, the report presents a number of coordination challenges and offers suggestions on how these challenges can be overcome.

Crisis Factors in the Sahel-Sahara

The Sahel region has been described as a conflict system that episodically erupts at the smallest of sparks. Several deep and multiform factors led to the latest crisis in the region and the temporary collapse of the Malian state in 2012. These factors include poor governance, rampant nepotism, impunity, and limited government legitimacy. In northern Mali, a weak state and a growing opposition between civilian and military authorities contributed to neglecting this space for a long period of time, resulting in its occupation by jihadists and in the March 2012 military coup in Bamako. Moreover, tribal and ethnic corporatism, the traditional racial and ethnic rift between black Malians and Tuareg communities, and the lack of a sense of public service were also cited among the factors that led to the crisis.

In Mali and other countries in the Sahel, underdevelopment is at the root of many security challenges. The country's economic fragility, socio-demographic vulnerability, and poor social service delivery contributed to the many other grievances that undergird the rebellion in Northern Mali. This was worsened by climate and geostrategic challenges threatening the region. Participants at the seminar emphasized the importance for other countries in the region to learn from the Malian experience, including Niger, which has developed a national Strategy for Security and Development in

the Sahel-Saharan Areas. The conflicted relationship between elected leaders and their constituents was raised as another area of concern.

In addition to poverty and development challenges, insecurity across the Sahel-Sahara was fueled by the implantation of radical Islamist groups and transnational criminality, which was facilitated by vast territories, porous borders, as well as the dysfunctional nature and limited capacities of the states in the region. It was observed that Mali's north had not been administered by the central government for a decade, and even when it was, traffickers were able to influence government appointments. Arms circulation following the collapse of Libya's former regime and the utilization of these arms to conduct criminal activities—including the lucrative business of foreign hostage taking—were used to destabilize states in the region. The transformation of the Sahel into a transit way for drug trafficking and a growing area of drug consumption especially by the youth also raised concerns.

Participants at the seminar noted the importance of acknowledging the responsibility of the states concerned in the crisis, which over a decade let terrorist groups settle and spread, destabilizing the entire Sahel region. The responsibility of the international community was also discussed. For example, part of the \$700 million spent by the US government in counterterrorism efforts in the Sahel went to training the Malian army,¹ including units from the north that later joined the rebellion during the crisis. The seminar participants agreed that such efforts could have been better coordinated, and the resources that were poured into these programs could have been utilized more efficiently.

The conflict was further linked to regional dynamics marked by Algeria's ambiguous role in the Sahel and its difficult relationship with Morocco. Despite its important strategic position in the region, Algeria has been reluctant to make use of its leverage to address the crisis. Explanations for Algeria's ambiguity include the conflicting strategies developed by various national decision centers, power struggles and dissent at the

¹ Peter Tinti, "What Has the US Already Tried in Mali?," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 20, 2012, available at www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2012/1120/What-has-the-US-already-tried-in-Mali.

highest level of the state, and ongoing fights to control the national oil and gas resources. Moreover, Algeria's own history—namely the violent independence war, the cancellation of the 1991 elections won by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), and the ensuing transformation of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, an offshoot of the FIS, into al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2007—as well as its special relations with Tuareg communities in the region seem to have prevented the North African country's involvement in the crisis. Algeria was criticized for using the tactic of a “pyromaniac fireman,” also illustrated by the inefficiency of the Joint Military Staff Committee of the Sahel Region (CEMOC). Bringing together Mali, Niger, and Mauritania in addition to Algeria, CEMOC was established to counter the threat of terrorism in the region.² For some participants at the seminar, the complexity of the security situation in the Sahel would remain unresolved as long as the Algerian state does not address its internal policy contradictions.

Aside from Algeria's ambiguities, Libya is increasingly feared to be at the center of the expansion of regional instability. The central government appears unable to assert its authority over its vast southern territories where new threats are brewing, namely the development of a jihadist sanctuary and a potential crisis between ethnic Toubous and Arabs. Libya's proximity to Darfur and northern Chad, where the Toubou tribes live mainly, predisposes the North African country to be at the heart of the next conflict in the region. This new crisis could pose further risks to the Sahel region, considering Libya's close connections to the Maghreb.

International, Regional, and National Response Strategies

No single country in the Sahel is able to address the challenges they face alone. With the support of the

international community, a combination of national and regional efforts can help define a credible and sustainable response to the recurring security and development challenges in this chronically troubled region. This calls for an integrated vision that goes beyond today's different analyses, perspectives, and responses.

THE PROPOSED UN INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR THE SAHEL

The UN integrated strategy for the Sahel is an inclusive response that takes into account Africa's current context. While it is not possible to talk about the Sahel without discussing the crisis in Mali, there will be no sustainable solution to the Malian conflict unless a comprehensive regional response is found.

The preparation of the UN integrated strategy for the Sahel was made possible by a range of international efforts.³ Concerned about terrorism, Security Council members agreed on the necessity to fight together against this emerging threat. And in helping to urgently address the crisis in Mali, the French intervention provided further momentum to counter the terrorist threat in the Sahel. Going forward, these efforts could be used as an opportunity to enhance cooperation in Mali and the region. In effect, the crisis facilitated joint efforts by concerned countries who pledged the necessary economic and financial resources to support recovery in the region. Intervention efforts aimed at complementing regional cooperation and the limited resources available at the individual country level through the Integrated Strategy have called for the creation of a Sahel action fund. After the adoption of the UN integrated strategy, it is important to assess the actual contribution of donor countries and institutions to the proposed fund. And to anticipate any bureaucratic burdens, a light coordination mechanism for this fund should be set up.

Addressing governance challenges in the Sahel was seen as another priority of the UN strategy. In that regard and to ensure minimum success for addressing these challenges, three actions were

2 Bérangère Rouppert, “The European Strategy for the Sahel,” Brussels: Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la Sécurité (GRIP), 2011, available at www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/2012-01-eaac/The_European_strategy_for_the_Sahel-Berangere_Rouppert.pdf.

3 Romano Prodi, the UN Special Envoy for the Sahel, presented the long-awaited strategy on June 2013 in the annex of UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Sahel Region*, UN Doc. S/2013/354, June 14, 2013, available at www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2013_354.pdf.

identified: people's participation in the definition of the problems affecting their communities and the solutions to these problems; civil society involvement; and the coordination of government action in the region with that of the UN.

The strategy further envisioned working in four ways:

- promote both security and development;
- transmit a sense of urgency to governments to meet their populations' needs;
- ensure the responsibility of the countries concerned to fulfill their various functions; and
- recall that no successful and sustainable development will come out of isolation or lack of cooperation.

THE EU RESPONSE

The crisis in the Sahel must be understood as affecting both sides of the Mediterranean Sea beyond the Sahara desert. In addition to its support to national and regional actors, Europe is concerned by the impact of the Sahel crisis on its own security, including such issues as drug trafficking, illegal migration, terrorism, and energy security. This further highlights the need for a global response, and the EU has adopted its own strategy for the Sahel,⁴ which defined four lines of action:

- development, good governance, and internal conflict resolution;
- political and diplomatic action;
- security and the rule of law; and
- countering violent extremism and radicalization.

Although the EU response was initially conceived to target Mali, Niger, and Mauritania, additional projects were implemented in Burkina Faso and Chad. After an initial budget of €150 million was mobilized for the implementation of the strategy, an additional €600 million budget was committed to the realization of the strategic objectives.

The EU strategy has identified a number of

objectives that aim to target the root causes of the crisis in the Sahel. These prerequisites for increased stability, security, and development in the region include the establishment of legitimate governments that are representative and inclusive; the restoration of state authority and its monopoly of force across the entire national territory; a functional and impartial justice system; and the restoration of the security forces and public administration. Moreover, peaceful conflict management and effective cross-border cooperation in the areas of policing and justice should be promoted. Other objectives identified seek to facilitate the effective participation of national and local actors in decision-making processes; ensure the delivery of essential social and technical services; develop and support the private sector; ensure the personal security of development and humanitarian actors; and mobilize sufficient national and external resources, as well as adequate capacity to absorb these resources.

In Niger, where the context was conducive for comprehensive planning, a national security and development strategy was crafted in line with the EU strategy. The national strategy facilitates the mobilization of resources, and several frameworks have since been developed to maintain and strengthen stability. One such framework is EUCAP Sahel Niger, a program established under the EU Common Security and Defense Policy in July 2012, at the request of the Niger government. EUCAP Sahel Niger supports Niger's internal security forces in their fight against terrorism and organized crime. The program has an annual budget of €8.7 million.⁵

REGIONAL RESPONSES AND COOPERATION CHALLENGES

In December 2011, the UN and the AU established a joint fact-finding mission that traveled across countries in the Sahel and reported on the challenges confronting the region in the wake of the Libyan crisis.⁶ In March 2012, a group of experts met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and sought to further assess and identify the security and

4 European Union External Action Service, "Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel," March 2011, available at www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf.

5 European Union External Action Service, "Common Security and Defence Policy: The EUCAP SAHEL Niger Civilian Mission Factsheet," available at http://consilium.europa.eu/media/1960390/eucap_sahel_factsheet_en_-_april_2013_final.pdf.

6 UN Security Council, *Report of the Assessment Mission on the Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Sahel Region, 7 to 23 December 2011*, UN Doc. S/2012/42, January 18, 2012, available at www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Libya%20S%202012%2042.pdf.

development risks facing the Sahel region. Two elements were underlined regarding regional and international response initiatives.

First, promoting ownership is indispensable for any sustainable intervention in the region. The AU, EU, and UN can provide Mali and the Sahel with many of the resources they need to address the crisis. However, unless these countries take ownership of the strategies proposed, there will be no tangible and sustainable results. Second, it remains important to develop an effective conflict early-warning capacity in the region. Participants at the seminar observed that several cooperation frameworks have been established across West Africa and the Sahel that can play a role in preventing and managing crises. However, their effectiveness in the Sahel has been limited by the fact that the region stretches over several African regional economic communities, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa. These multiple groupings make it difficult to implement region-wide conflict prevention mechanisms, including at the level of the core countries in the Sahel.

Moreover, while the AU supported ECOWAS's intervention in Mali through the framework provided by its continental peace and security architecture, the framework proved to be insufficient. Following the deployment of France's Operation Serval in Mali, the January 2013 AU summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia provided African leaders with an opportunity to draw initial lessons from the French intervention. Considering it a serious shortcoming in addressing Africa's challenges well after most African countries' independence, regional leaders recognized the need for the AU peace and security architecture to evolve and for the continent to be equipped with a rapid intervention force.

Cooperation challenges persist despite positive developments in the region. One could have anticipated that regional cooperation would improve after the demise of Muammar al-Gaddafi in Libya and the military coup against the corrupt government of former Malian president Amadou

Toumani Touré. One may have also expected that the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) would act as a catalyst for ECOWAS, in an attempt to overcome the challenge of security cooperation in the Sahel-Saharan region. However, the divide between ECOWAS countries and their neighbors in the north and east of the Sahara desert remained obvious as neither Algeria, Mauritania, nor Libya took part in AFISMA. Algeria and Mauritania maintained an ambiguous position for a long time, presumably due to a fear that a military intervention would send the Islamist militants back to their countries of origin. In addition, both countries seemed to keep a margin of maneuver for themselves, which could later influence possible negotiations. Algeria sees itself as a counterweight to French and greater European influence in the region. While in Mauritania, cultural factors and political dynamics led policymakers to frame the military intervention in Mali as one of "black soldiers" against "white populations." All these dynamics led observers to conclude that the concerned African countries had missed a unique opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation in the Sahel-Saharan.

In addition to concerns over Algeria and Mauritania, cooperation among the core countries in the Sahel has never been effective, and a subregional framework limited to this group—which does not include Chad, Nigeria, Libya, or other regional key players—is considered too narrow for any regional initiative to be sustainable. Further, current regional arrangements are also incomplete frameworks. Neither ECOWAS nor the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD) appears to be an appropriate model for cooperation, since they do not include Algeria. Some participants at the seminar expressed the view that cooperation initiatives needed to come from countries in the region themselves with the UN's approval. However, since the UN can only support national and regional capacities and not replace them, this option may not be the most appropriate framework either. Thus, the question was raised about the AU and whether the continental body could provide the most appropriate framework for developing a regional strategy to respond to the crisis in the Sahel-Saharan in a durable manner.

To strengthen regional cooperation, a suggestion

was made to establish an original conflict management model to reduce grievances and address issues of common interest in a comprehensive manner. In the Sahel-Sahara, a consultation framework could replicate existing cooperation mechanisms such as the Western Mediterranean Forum, commonly known as the “5+5 Dialogue,” among western Mediterranean Sea countries. Launched in October 1990, the 5+5 Dialogue brings together five countries from Europe—namely France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, and Spain—and five countries from the Maghreb—namely Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. For example, a similar cooperative framework would regroup these five countries in the Maghreb with Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Senegal in the Sahel for collaboration in the areas of economic development and the human and cultural aspects of security.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL RESPONSES

Malian political actors initially failed to present a united front to the international community. Nonetheless, regional and international support set off a dynamic that later encouraged them to move toward more solidarity. A national response to the crisis was developed and the government presented—despite several months of delay—a roadmap detailing its plans to come out of the crisis and to make preparations for presidential elections set for late July.⁷ Although the election date divided the Malian public, for the international community, there was agreement that the situation had lasted too long, and it was important to quickly organize a return to constitutional rule after the March 2012 coup d’état.

Other countries in the Sahel also developed national responses to the crisis. In Niger, the national Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel-Saharan Areas of Niger constitutes an innovative approach to conflict prevention that gives a stronger dynamic to economic, social, and cultural development.⁸ The strategy is centered on five main priorities:

- strengthening the security of persons and

property;

- facilitating people's access to economic opportunities;
- facilitating access to basic social services;
- strengthening local governance; and
- ensuring the social and economic integration of forced returnees from Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Algeria.

In addition, the Niger parliament called upon the government to take the necessary measures to ensure border security, and it authorized the country's troop contribution to AFISMA in conformity with the constitution. Additional initiatives were considered at the time of the seminar, including:

- creating a network of parliamentarians for the prevention and management of conflicts, which could also serve as a reflection forum;
- training of members of parliament on issues of democracy, social justice, good governance, and the involvement of the population in the management of security issues; and
- promoting greater parliament oversight of the government.

Despite these initiatives, however, national actors in Niger remain attentive to the fact that sustainable peace requires the implementation of long-term strategies.

The Way to Sustainable Security and Development in the Sahel-Sahara

Past efforts to advance security and development in the Sahel proved limited because these initiatives did not put people at the center. For a participant at the Niamey seminar, these efforts resembled “building a hospital where no patient would be treated.” Therefore, an effective response to the crisis in the Sahel should come after a thorough examination and not be limited to superficial approaches.

⁷ Republic of Mali Office of the Prime Minister, “Roadmap for Transition,” January 2013, available at http://donor-conference-mali.eu/sites/default/files/generated/pdf/page/2_Feuille%20de%20Route%20Mali%20version%20finale%2026%20janvier%202013.pdf.

⁸ Republic of Niger, “Strategy For Development and Security In Sahel-Saharan Areas of Niger,” October 2011, available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sds_version_english.pdf.

BUILDING STATE CAPACITY BY STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE

In Mali, the absence of a strong state should be corrected, especially in its border areas—where numerous, but mostly inefficient civil servants were posted. Further, issues of capacity must be addressed. The seminar participants emphasized the need to devise a new form of governance that takes into account local realities, including the diversity of identities overlooked at the time of independence. Reinforcing local governance and decentralization was presented as an important response option to strengthen state capacity. A solid foundation at the local level—which requires adequate resources to accompany the devolution of powers to local governments and communities—should form the basis of a new democratic construction and help move toward correcting the administration deficit in neglected areas. Families and communities can serve as sources of conflict prevention and management if policymakers focus on the local level and facilitate the reconnection of disconnected territories. Additional actors working to address the crisis in Mali and the Sahel were encouraged to “think globally, but act locally.”

Renewed strategies to strengthen local governance can build on the decentralization process that already exists in Sahel-Saharan countries. In Mali, this process was initiated in the early 1990s, with the ambition to enroot democracy and promote sustainable development. An assessment of the decentralization process that was operationalized in 1999 shows both important achievements and persistent weaknesses. In Goundam, a municipality in the Timbuktu region, a committee for the prevention and management of conflict was established, and in the context of the acute crisis, local leaders remained useful referents for their constituents. Additional initiatives taken by some elected local leaders—including the promotion of women’s participation, education, and healthcare—facilitated the emergence of new and informed young leaders who are perceived to be closer to the populations, less corrupt, and more credible.

However, the results of these initiatives remain insufficient. Local communities are still far from controlling their development programs. With a partial transfer of competencies and resources,

these collectivities are unable to meet their populations’ needs. The limited resources available are concentrated on basic social service delivery and very few are allocated to development initiatives. These weaknesses partly explain the crisis in northern Mali and make it urgent to speed up the implementation of the decentralization process. The seminar participants reiterated that local governance, built on development programs that are integrated and adapted to local specificities, should be part of a comprehensive response to the crisis in the Sahel.

Local governance by itself, however, cannot ensure the effectiveness of governance practices. Additional frameworks must be put in place to ensure that legitimacy and plurality are guaranteed through free, transparent, and democratic elections. Participation in elections should be improved; and local communities would benefit from the involvement of all social categories, including women and the youth. Governance frameworks must also be established and reinforced to promote a culture of transparency. While state capacity should be reinforced, this should not simply aim toward more initiatives, but rather it should aim at an improved state. This objective can be achieved by valorizing citizen education and establishing spaces of dialogue among elected leaders and their communities, with civil society actors, and between collectivities. Increased citizen participation in the definition and implementation of development strategies, in national debates on security issues, as well as in efforts to advance reconciliation and social cohesion among the communities were further discussed as critical elements in a response to the crisis. Moreover, improved relations with technical and financial partners must lead to local actors’ involvement in the definition of programs, and their capacities should be strengthened in the areas of social service delivery and economic development.

The need for careful implementation of decentralization policies was further highlighted. In a country like Niger where mineral resources are readily available, decentralization could have a beneficial impact on balancing relations between the center and the periphery. However, in the case of Mali, the seminar participants observed that the regions already endowed with considerable

resources would continue to suffer from the implementation of poor decentralization policies. In this case, the most important element of an effective decentralization policy should be the link between local resources and their utilization by the state.

TACKLING POVERTY

Participants at the Niamey seminar also discussed the need to address poverty and development challenges in response to the crisis in the region. From an economic perspective, the meeting addressed the question of an equitable share of the fruits produced by growing economies. Responses to poverty-related elements of the crisis in northern Mali must consider the following three facts:

- Terrorism is funded more by the business of hostage taking than drug trafficking—in 2011, the average ransom payment to terrorist groups by Western countries was estimated at \$5.4 million per hostage, and AQIM is reported to have made \$90 million in the past decade from kidnapping Western nationals.⁹
- Rather than promoting a return to handicraft activities and ecotourism, what is needed is massive growth, where productivity, know-how, and profit are encouraged.
- Beyond the concept of a golden age of interreligious dialogue, there is a need to dissolve Salafism and Jihadism into policies aimed toward prosperity.

Thus, possible strategies to advance development in the region include bankrupting and dismantling the AQIM enterprise, which entails taking care of the militants ideologically and materially by proposing an ambitious economic model. Elements of such strategies might include creating jobs for the youth in the service sector; developing an inclusive agricultural and food security plan; and overcoming the challenge of regional integration in the Maghreb. Strengthening the private sector was also seen as critical in creating a viable social and economic foundation and releasing pressure on the state. Entrepreneurship could help to ensure the provision of basic social services throughout national territories, foster job creation, and promote approaches to sustainable development

that take into account local specificities. In a context where it is important that politics lead the economy and not the opposite, the reality of free circulation of people and goods in the ECOWAS region was seen as an advantage to build upon.

Further discussions highlighted the absence of a conceptualization of development in the region. Current development approaches in the Sahel have often sought to deal directly with tribal leaders instead of engaging with the communities directly. While important resources have been invested in these efforts, limited results are seen on the ground. The same challenges can be found across the region in Mali but also in Algeria, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Therefore, revised and coordinated development strategies must give local populations the opportunity to come up with their own understanding of and priorities for development. For instance, it was observed that an activity such as farming had not been included in national economic plans and the seminar participants emphasized the importance for countries in the region to take charge of all possible levers that can contribute to multiplying their limited resources. Further, because some of northern Mali's problems are also found in northern Niger, the importance of considering transversal development programs was discussed. The seminar advised SDS Niger to take into account Mali's experience, where persistent development challenges were identified among the causes of the successive Tuareg rebellions.

Additional questions addressed lessons learned from across the region. Noting that injustices—more than underdevelopment—have led to inequalities and crises, seminar participants highlighted the need to develop and implement policies that advance ethical governance. The importance of accountability and the fight against impunity was also discussed, especially for environmental degradation in areas of mineral resources exploitation. The need to address the region's recurrent humanitarian crises was also emphasized. The participants at the seminar acknowledged it is easier to obtain funding for humanitarian activities than for development projects. Thus, household and community resilience must be built to ensure long-term

⁹ "Hostage-taking—Trading Places: An Uncoordinated Approach to Kidnapping," *The Economist*, March 16, 2013, available at www.economist.com/news/international/21573608-unco-ordinated-approach-kidnapping-trading-places.

construction and anticipate future crises.

ADDRESSING SECURITY CHALLENGES

Weakening the various criminal activities that threaten stability in the Sahel is a key concern. Recalling that payment of ransoms is the principal source of funding for terrorism in the region, the participants at the seminar denounced the considerable sums made by a number of European countries to free their nationals, and they reiterated a call not to pay ransoms to terrorist groups in exchange of hostages. Efforts to counter and eradicate terrorism involve drying up Islamist groups' resource supply. In addition they require addressing issues of unemployment and corruption. However, for some participants, poverty alleviation should not be the prime consideration, and the fight against terrorism should first and foremost be a security challenge before taking into account its development aspects.

To enhance regional security, the seminar participants further recommended the implementation of disarmament programs and the harmonization of their national regulations by countries in the region to limit arms circulation. Better access and control of their territory by governments was considered necessary to ensure territorial stability and support coherent development efforts, as are greater efforts to address territorial claims across the region. And with regard to the increase of drug trafficking, seminar participants called on the affected countries to strengthen their cooperation with a view to developing a comprehensive response to this emerging threat.

With regard to the situation in Mali, neighboring countries and the international community were called upon to help Malians peacefully address the crisis and ensure that this experience helps prevent similar situations across the region. It was recalled that the crisis in Mali was preceded by clear signs of conflict. However, a negligence to take into account these indicators led to a weak initial response. Participants at the Niamey seminar reiterated that the crisis in the Sahel illustrates the limitations of operationalizing early-warning mechanisms in the region and the underutilization of existing conflict prevention mechanisms. Both at the regional and national levels, more research is therefore needed to anticipate and prevent conflicts.

In that regard, the seminar underlined the disconnect that exists between the scientific and political spheres in the region and the subsequent marginalization of African intellectuals and national experts in trying to identify solutions to the recent crisis. The participants agreed that research and analysis should be further developed for its appropriate utilization by policymakers. Such efforts can be strengthened by supporting and establishing networks among research institutions and think tanks in the Sahel-Saharan region. Additional conflict prevention strategies could include emphasizing national capacity building to facilitate the involvement of citizens in the debate on security issues and government accountability over defense and security matters.

The crisis in Mali constituted the latest manifestation of the recurring cycle of insecurity in the Sahel. While each situation is particular and should be contextualized, it was feared that the war in Mali was only at its early stages, with the risk that the conflict would transform into an asymmetrical war that would be difficult to end. This is more so since the problems that led to the crisis in Mali are similar to those brewing across the Sahel, from Mauritania to Somalia. Thus, the transnational nature of insecurity in the region and the risks of deadlock posed by attempts to address the crisis only at the national level highlighted the need for comprehensive approaches that should take into account existing coordination mechanisms.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION

The participants at the Niamey seminar noted that a security-only approach and social and economic development will not necessarily address religious and identity conflicts in Mali and the Sahel. West Africa has a long history of empires and kingdoms with limited problems of identity, race, or religion. Yet today, the current racial tensions among black populations, Tuaregs, and Arabs can prevent any sustainable resolution of the crisis in Mali. Century-long values that have bound the various populations living in the region over time—including solidarity, tolerance, and a sense of commitment—can therefore help to restore the social fabric and to rebuild strong relationships among divided communities. In areas that were routinely neglected by the central authorities, it will be particularly important to involve local popula-

tions in the development and implementation of the social cohesion solutions.

Another way to enhance social cohesion could be the creation of nomadic municipalities (*communes nomades*) that take into account local specificities. Nomadic municipalities highlight the need for countries in the Sahel to move toward diversity and are tied to particular systems of production and association with nature. In Niger, the 1992 constitution created special municipalities and takes into account cultural specificities such as nomadism of populations that are now represented in parliament. However, in the Malian context, this suggestion was clearly contested. Mali has adopted a new territorial mapping, which was severely criticized even before its implementation. For some seminar participants, rather than seeking to divide the region further, new governance approaches should consider how a focus on diversity could serve as a bridge among communities seeking to live in peace despite their differences.

Participants also discussed the critical role played by traditional leaders in northern Mali, and the need to institute dialogue as a function of governance. Dialogue platforms must be established to facilitate government consultation with all the country's political components, communities with centuries-long relationships, and with civil society. Such permanent consultation process can be gradually enhanced by putting a strong emphasis on education and by developing a general sense of citizenship and commitment among the populations. The importance of dialogue was emphasized at the national level in Mali where the political class remained divided, at the regional level to facilitate the establishment and the coordination of monitoring systems to prevent future crises, and at the continental and global levels to strengthen the existing consultation mechanisms.

Overcoming Coordination Challenges

The gaps between the policies being developed in response to the crisis in Mali and the Sahel and their implementation on the ground raise questions about their coordination. Two key concerns need to be addressed in this regard: (1) how can responses go beyond warnings and

debates and ensure follow-up, and (2) how can the responses being implemented move from competition to cooperation among the various actors and institutions involved.

Noting the importance of agreeing on the purpose of coordination, the participants at the Niamey seminar highlighted the need for a common vision. Developing a common vision can be hindered by the lack of joint analyses at the national and regional levels and the absence of complementary response strategies among the key stakeholders. In addition, the difficulties linked to coordination itself were listed among possible challenges (due, for example, to the urgency of action, differing priorities among the institutions concerned, and the focus on their own work). Seminar participants also deplored the absence of a common understanding of the type of development needed for the Sahel region, the existence of competing external interests, and the proliferation of regional and international actors that resulted in silencing local actors.

Coordination efforts must move beyond simply sharing information toward strategies that strengthen the capacity of the state concerned, starting from the clear definition of their own priorities. At the same time, leadership must be extended to countries that have the necessary resources. Ensuring that all those involved effectively cooperate will require overcoming fragmented support and competition among actors. In this case, it is critical to agree on an institution that can steer the definition of a common vision and coordinate the predictable competition of both international actors and the various actors at national and local levels. In the case of Mali, the Support and Follow-up Group on the situation in the country (which first met in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in June 2012 and is co-chaired by the AU and the UN) resulted from such a consensus to jointly assist the country. The seminar emphasized the need to strengthen the coordination mechanisms that already exist instead of creating new ones. Thus, another suggestion was to look at coordination in the context of subsidiarity, from states at the national level, to ECOWAS at the regional level, to the AU at the continental level, and to the UN at the global level.

In Mali, the seminar recalled that the UN integrated strategy for the Sahel recognizes the

key role played by local and national actors. This role was also acknowledged at the regional level, with two frameworks developed by ECOWAS and the AU: (1) a strategic concept adopted in Bamako in October 2012 and (2) a concept of operations that paved the way for the military intervention. Further coordination efforts resulted in ECOWAS's leading of the preliminary mediation process among Malian actors, and AU's involvement in AFISMA's military, police, and civilian components. Moreover, despite their relative success often due to variable political will, continental institutions including the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Development Bank were presented as frameworks that can advance and coordinate joint development initiatives in the Sahel-Saharan region.

Some participants at the Niamey seminar were concerned about a tendency to believe that Malians were unable to come up with home-grown solutions to address the crisis in their country. It was argued that regional and international actors' generosity should not prevent them from seeing what is already happening on the ground. And while there is enough space to involve every institution or actor ready to help Mali, these joint efforts must be better articulated with due consideration given to the initiatives of local actors.

Despite the occupation of northern Mali, the local administration continued to function. Local leaders came together to understand and respond to the situation. Women groups and human rights organizations continued to monitor the situation and provided useful information. The private sector also continued to work on addressing the country's development challenges. Moreover, informal spaces of dialogue were established with the support of the UN Development Programme to engage a broad range of actors including political parties and religious groups. Coordination efforts were also developed among international actors on the ground. A cluster system was established, which brought together national actors and international NGOs supporting humanitarian efforts in Mali. A platform for technical development partners was also set up, and Mali's technical as well as financial partners interacted and continued to work together, trying to find new ways to support the country through its local collectivities.

Conclusion

The Niamey seminar concluded with a recognition that the recent crisis in Mali and the Sahel was highly complex. While many of its underlying causes are local, its ramifications are transnational in origin and effect. The intricate dynamics of regional cooperation and coordination challenges—which resulted in competing interventions and a gap between the policies offered to address the crisis and their implementation on the ground—have the potential to delay the return to sustainable peace and development in the Sahel-Saharan. A number of suggestions were formulated at the seminar, which can help overcome these challenges.

- More inclusive and effective conflict prevention, early-warning, and response mechanisms are needed. The failure of regional institutions to anticipate the crisis in Mali and address it in a timely manner underscores the shortcomings of these institutions. Improved relations among countries in the region and the identification of appropriate cooperation frameworks are important prerequisites to build a secure and prosperous Sahel-Saharan.
- A strong emphasis must be put on strengthening state capacity, which can build on the promotion of local governance and the implementation of effective decentralization policies. These renewed decentralization efforts have the potential to overcome the challenges posed by weak state institutions and the failure of security and development programs that enabled the crisis in the region.
- Advancing security and development in the Sahel should consider key elements including countering terrorism and transnational crime by offering viable ideological and economic alternatives to exposed youth, strengthening private enterprise to foster job creation, broadening the territorial basis for social services, promoting approaches to sustainable development that take into account local specificities, and harmonizing regional development strategies.
- Enhancing social cohesion by reconciling conflicting communities with centuries-long relationships and promoting dialogue as a function of governance can complement peace

efforts that focus on security and economic development.

- Joint efforts are undoubtedly needed to address the crisis. For the international community, these efforts call for an improved coordination of its support, which takes into account the existing national and regional initiatives as well as ownership concerns. Future support should also

facilitate the involvement of the populations concerned in the analysis of the context as well as in the definition and implementation of local security and development programs. The identification of a flexible and manageable coordination mechanism should facilitate the harmonization of the multiple response strategies.

Agenda

International Seminar on Security and Development in the Sahel-Sahara

Niamey, Niger

Friday, February 15, 2013

- 09:00–09:30 **Opening Ceremony**
- Welcoming Remarks**
Mr. Dossou Abba, *Secretary-General, on behalf of the Governor of the Niamey Region*
Mr. Najim Elhadj Mohamed, *Executive Secretary of Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel-Saharan Areas of Niger (SDS Sahel Niger), President of the Organizing Committee*
Dr. Youssef Mahmoud, *Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute*
Ambassador Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, *President, Centre for Strategies and Security for the Sahel Sahara (Centre 4S)*
- 09:30–10:00 **Opening Address**
H.E. Mr. Brigi Rafini, *Prime Minister, Head of Government, Niger*
- 10:00–10:30 **Group Photo and Coffee Break**
- 10:30–12:30 **Working Session 1: The Evolving Crisis in the Sahel-Sahara**
What are the recent political and security developments in the Sahel-Sahara region? What new dynamics have these developments triggered—including among the various state and nonstate actors? What is the impact of these developments on the humanitarian, human rights, and development situation? What are the geopolitical and transnational implications of these developments? What are some possible evolution scenarios?
- Chair**
H.E. Mr. Amadou Boubacar Cissé, *Minister of State, Minister of Planning, Niger*
- Speakers**
H.E. Mr. Marou Amadou, *Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seals, Niger*
Mr. David Gressly, *Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for Sahel, OCHA*
Mrs. Oumou Sall Seck, *Mayor of Goundam (Timbuktu Circle), Mali*
Mr. Mehdi Taje, *Geopolitics Expert, Tunisia*
- Discussion**
- 12:30–14:00 **Prayer and Lunch Break**
- 14:00–15:00 **Address**
Mr. Romano Prodi, *Secretary-General Special Envoy for the Sahel, United Nations*

Introduction

Ambassador Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, *President, Centre 4S*

15:00–16:00

Plenary Discussion

16:00–18:00

Working Session 2: Regional and International Responses

In light of the context analysis of the previous sessions, what should the main components or elements of an integrated, inclusive, and well-coordinated strategy for the Sahel be? What are some of the implementation challenges? How could they be overcome?

Chair

Ambassador Said Djinnit, *Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa*

Speakers

H.E. Mr. Hans-Peter Schadek, *Head, European Union Delegation, Niamey*

Mr. Abdelmalek Alaoui, *President, Global Intelligence Partners, Morocco*

Wolfram Lacher, *Associate Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs*

Dr. Fodé N'diaye, *Resident Coordinator of the UN System, Niger*

Discussion

20:00–22:30

Dinner**Address**

H.E. Mr. Brigi Rafini, *Prime Minister, Niger*

Presentation

Mr. Najim Elhadj Mohamed, *Executive Secretary, SDS Sahel Niger*

Introduction

Ambassador Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, *President, Centre 4S*

Saturday, February 16, 2013

09:00–11:00

Working Session 3: Challenges to International Coordination and Cooperation

How should regional and international actors organize themselves to enhance synergies and coordination in policy formulation and implementation? Are new mechanisms needed to help address policy gaps as they arise, and what are the implementation challenges of current or envisaged strategies?

Chair

Ambassador Kai Eide, *Special Envoy on the Sahel, Norway*

Speakers

Général Francisco Espinoza, *Head of Mission EUCAP Sahel Niger*

Dr. Issa Abdourrahmane Boubacar, *Project Manager, International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF)*

Professor André Bourgeot, *Collège de France*

Discussion

11:00–11:30

Coffee Break

11:30–13:00

Plenary Discussion

13:00–14:15

Lunch Break

14:15–15:00

AddressH.E. Pierre Buyoya, *High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, African Union***Introduction**Ambassador Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, *President, Centre 4S*

15:00–17:00

Working Session 4: General Debate**Chair**H.E. Mr. Amadou Boubacar Cissé, *Minister of State, Minister of Planning, Niger*

(N.B.: During this session, participants were invited to register and speak on the seminar topic under the Chatham House Rule)

17:00–17:15

Presentation and Validation of the Final Communiqué

17:15–18:00

Closing Ceremony**Reading of Final Statement**Mr. Mohamadou Abdoulaye, *Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Niger***Closing Remarks**Ambassador Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, *President, Centre 4S*Dr. Youssef Mahmoud, *Senior Advisor, IPI*H.E. Mr. Brigi Rafini, *Prime Minister, Niger*

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