FOURTH MEETING OF THE HEADS OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION

17 FEBRUARY 2014
NIAMEY, NIGER

OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS
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1. The 4th meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region was held in N’Djamena, Niger, on 17 February 2014. The following countries participated in the meeting: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. In addition to the Commission of the African Union (AU), the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Committee of the Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of the Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), as well as the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA), also participated in the meeting.

2. The meeting was held within the framework of the Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalisation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan Region, as a follow-up to the previous meetings of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the countries of the region, held respectively in Bamako, on 18 April 2013, in Abidjan, on 20 and 21 June 2013, and in N’Djamena, on 10 September 2013.

3. The opening ceremony was marked by the statements made by the Minister of Interior, Public Security, Decentralization and Customary and Religious Matters of the Republic of Niger, Mr. Assoudou Hassoumi, and Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, as well as by the representative of the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr. Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo.

4. The meeting reviewed the security situation in the region and the measures taken for the implementation of the Operational Conclusions adopted in N’Djamena, on the basis of the 2nd Progress Report on the Nouakchott Process submitted by the AU Commission, as well as the presentation on the overall situation in the Sahel made by the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, former President Pierre Buyoya.

5. Participants welcomed the progress made during the period under consideration, stressing that the Nouakchott Process had made it possible to significantly enhance security cooperation among the countries of the region. They congratulated the countries of the region which have taken specific steps as part of the implementation of the N’djamena Conclusions, including the combating of radicalization, the prevention of infiltration of terrorist elements into the Malian refugee camps in the neighboring countries and the establishment of inter-Ministerial structures to deal with specific issues. Participants encouraged the Commission, the ACSRT, CISSA and UFL to facilitate, in cooperation with the countries concerned, the dissemination of these best practices.
6. Participants stressed the need to pursue and intensify the efforts made, particularly in the light of the persistence of the terrorist threat, as evidenced by the resumption of the attacks and other acts perpetrated by the terrorist groups operating in northern Mali and the continued acts of terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram and Ansaru in Nigeria.

7. Participants exchanged on the difficult situation in Libya and agreed on the need for renewed efforts to assist that country address the challenges at hand, including through exchange of information.

8. Participants noted the exploitation by the terrorist groups of inter-communal tension and conflicts, stressing that this situation calls for specific measures and the active involvement of the local authorities and Governments in the border areas. They also noted the links with cross-border criminal activities, including drug trafficking (cocaine and cannabis) and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as well as the threat posed by the return to the region of terrorist elements who were involved in fighting in other parts of the world.

9. Participants, noting the delay sometimes experienced in the exchange of intelligence among Services, agreed to take appropriate measures to expedite the communication of operational information, bearing in mind their urgent nature. Similarly, they recognized the need for the Member States to equip themselves with strengthened capacity in terms of personnel and equipment, including the establishment of special units to be able to address more effectively the challenge of terrorism and transnational crime. Recalling the relevant provisions of the communiqué adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), at its 249th meeting held on 22 November 2010, participants encouraged the Commission to expedite the elaboration of an African arrest warrant for persons charged with or convicted of terrorist acts.

10. Participants were updated about the efforts for the establishment of a secure communication system among the services of the countries participating in the Nouakchott Process. They were informed that a solution for the operationalization of this system would be found very soon. In the meantime, they welcomed the offer made by the UFL to extend its secure communication system to the three member countries of the Nouakchott Process which are not members of the UFL (Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Senegal), as well as to ACSRT, CISSA and MISAHEL.

11. Participants noted with satisfaction the activities carried out by the ACSRT in the field of capacity building, through the organization of training workshops and the conduct of assessment missions to some countries of the region. They congratulated the ACSRT on the growing role it is playing with respect to national capacity building. They also welcomed the initiatives taken by the CISSA and the UFL, and called for the pursuit of all capacity building efforts on the basis of the
matrix prepared by the ACSRT, CISSA and UFL. Within that framework, they stressed the need for the AU Member States to contribute financially, according to the most appropriate modalities, to the implementation of the envisaged programs.

12. Regarding the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahelo-Saharan region, participants stressed the need to expedite the efforts exerted in this respect, taking into account the decisions adopted by the January 2014 AU Summit on the assessment of the African Standby Force (ASF) and the operationalization of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). They noted, in this respect, the proposals made by the Commission in its progress report to the attention of the ministerial meeting, namely the convening of meetings of the Chiefs of Defense Staff and the Ministers of Defense to consider the generic concepts of operation for joint patrols and mixed units and the modalities for the enhancement of the existing structures for security cooperation, as well as the establishment in Niamey of a lean Secretariat under MISAHEL leadership.

13. Participants reaffirmed the commitment of their respective countries and organizations to continue to work towards the enhancement of the Nouakchott Process. They noted in this respect the proposal made by the Commission for the convening of a Summit of the countries participating in the Process. They also encouraged the concerned Regional Economic Communities to own the Nouakchott Process and to support its implementation.

14. Participants were briefed by MISAHEL on the AU Strategy for the Sahel region, which will be submitted to the ministerial meeting of 19 February 2014, for consideration and validation.

15. Participants welcomed the offer by Burkina Faso to host the 5th meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services, at a date to be agreed upon through consultation between the Commission and the relevant Burkinabe authorities.

16. Participants expressed their gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Niger for the warm reception accorded to them and for all the arrangements that ensured the smooth holding of their meeting.