



Civil Society Dialogue Network Geographic Meeting

Towards Peace: Delivering Public Services and Responsive Governance in the Sahel

Thursday 19 May 2022 (10.00-12.00 & 13.00-15.00 CEST / Brussels time)

Online

Concept Note

Background

The Sahel region faces a number of governance, development and security challenges, which are often interlinked. While some of them are specific to individual countries, others are similar across borders or are transnational in nature. In order to address these challenges, the Heads of State of Burkina Faso, Chad, France, Mali, Mauritania and Niger¹ announced in January 2020 the creation of the Coalition for the Sahel, which aims at 'providing a more collective and inclusive response to the Sahel crisis' and at ensuring 'coherent action at the regional level'.² In April 2021 the Council of the EU adopted [conclusions](#) on a new EU integrated strategy for the Sahel.³

In March 2021, the Coalition adopted a [Roadmap](#) consisting of four pillars: (1) 'fight against terrorism', (2) 'strengthening the capabilities of the G5 Sahel armed forces', (3) 'support for the return of the state and administrations in the territory' and (4) 'development assistance'. The European Union (EU) is a key partner of the Coalition as it co-leads the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel – P3S, covering the second and third pillars. The third pillar, in particular, involves pursuing the 'civilian and political surge' [decided at the N'Djamena summit](#), ensuring that state authorities are able to regain a presence over all of their territory and to resume providing public services to populations.

The ministerial meeting of the Sahel Coalition in March 2022 asked for an update of the roadmap by June 2022. In order to gather civil society input on the revision of the third pillar in particular, this Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) meeting will bring together civil society experts working in/on the Sahel and EU policymakers, to exchange on how the EU should support peace and stabilisation through the civilian and political surge, articulating civilian and military/security efforts, aiming at the fair provision of public services, and responsiveness and transparency in governance, throughout the territories of Sahel countries.

¹ In the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General, the President of the European Council, the European Union High Representative, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary General of La Francophonie

² See the [Sahel Coalition website](#).

³ A CSDN Geographic Meeting entitled 'Conflict Dynamics and Drivers of Peace in the Sahel Region: Gathering Civil Society Input' was organised in March 2020 as the EU was looking to adjust its engagement in the region. The report from the discussions is [available here](#).

Objective

The overall objective of the meeting will be to gather civil society recommendations on how the EU should contribute to peace and stabilisation in the Sahel by supporting improved access to, and delivery by state authorities of, public services; responsive, inclusive and transparent governance, including in relation to articulating civilian and military/security efforts; and building trust between state authorities and populations. This will include discussing, inter alia:

- What are the core components of any efforts to improve Sahel states authorities' ability to deliver public services, including security for populations, fairly throughout their territories, and how should the EU support these efforts in practice?
- How should the EU support and promote responsive, inclusive and transparent governance, and help build trust between state authorities and populations, throughout the Sahel?
- What are the key patterns of exclusion that must be addressed as part of the EU's efforts to support state authorities' presence and ability to deliver public services?
- What are some of the common and/or transnational trends relating to these issues? What are some of the country and local-level differences? What are examples of lessons learned and good/bad practices in addressing these issues?
- How should the EU support civil society organisations and local communities as part of its efforts to improve state responsiveness and accountability, and to improve the effectiveness of inclusive service delivery?
- How should the relationships (or absence thereof) between security interventions and the return of a state presence in territories be approached and/or sequenced? How should the EU support the protection of civilians and compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL)? What should be continued, stopped, or done differently?

The discussions will explicitly address considerations relating to gender equality, youth and the climate crisis for these issues.

Participants

The meeting will bring together around 30 participants, including 15-20 civil society experts and officials from the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Commission (EC) and the office of the EU Special Representative for the Sahel.

Format

The meeting will take the form of a facilitated online round-table discussion under the Chatham House Rule.⁴ It will last four hours in total. Participants will be split into small groups during some of the sessions. The meeting will be held via the online platform Zoom.

Language

The meeting will take place in French and English. Simultaneous interpretation from French to English and from English to French will be provided.

⁴ Participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed (see: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/chatham-house-rule>).

Agenda

Thursday 19 May	
10.00 – 10.10 CEST (Brussels time)	<p>Welcome and introductory remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonya Reines-Djivanides, Executive Director (EPLO) • Guillaume Gallouin, Acting Coordinator, S.P3S, ISP (EEAS) • Frederic Ceuppens, Sahel Coordinator, MD Afrique (EEAS)
10.10 – 10.30 CEST	<p>Tour de table</p>
10.30 – 11.15 CEST	<p>Session 1: Supporting responsive public service delivery, including security for populations, and inclusive governance in the Sahel (small groups)</p> <p>In small groups, participants will be invited to focus on how the EU should support responsive public service delivery, including security for populations, and inclusive and transparent governance, in the Sahel. The discussions will centre on ensuring the return (or strengthening) of a state presence in territories, where relevant in connection with security interventions articulating civilian and military efforts.</p> <p>The questions to be discussed may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should the EU do to help ensure that state authorities are perceived positively as providers of basic services, including security, where relevant in connection with security/military interventions? How should current 'stabilisation' efforts be strengthened, further developed or changed? • What initiatives should the EU support to help build trust between communities and authorities? How should the EU support increasing the transparency of state institutions? • What should EU priorities be in supporting improved inclusive public service delivery by Sahel state authorities throughout their territories? Does this involve working with both formal and informal governance structures? If yes, how? • How should the EU support making local and national governance structures more inclusive and responsive throughout the Sahel?
11.15 – 12.00 CEST	<p>Session 2: Supporting responsive public service delivery, including security for populations, and inclusive governance (plenary)</p> <p>In this plenary session, participants will be invited to present and to reflect on the outcomes of the small group discussions, and to share possible additional recommendations for the EU on the issues discussed.</p>
12.00 – 13.00 CEST	<p>Break</p>

13.00 – 13.45 CEST	<p>Session 3: Promoting dialogue and protecting civilians in the Sahel (small groups)</p> <p>In small groups, participants will be invited to focus on how the EU should promote dialogue between authorities and populations and support the protection of civilians by security forces.</p> <p>The questions to be discussed may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should the EU help connect and support mediation efforts at the local, national and regional levels? • How can the EU support increased safety of local people and communities as state security forces strengthen their presence across the region? • What initiatives should the EU support to help build trust between communities and security forces? • How should the EU support increased protection of civilians by security forces and enhance security agents' compliance with human rights standards and international humanitarian law (IHL)? What should be continued, stopped, or done differently? • How should the EU help strengthen the accountability of security forces, and how should it support civil society actors in contributing to this?
13.45 – 14.30 CEST	<p>Session 4: Promoting dialogue and protecting civilians in the Sahel (plenary session)</p> <p>In this plenary session, participants will be invited to present and to reflect on the outcomes of the small group discussions, and to share possible additional recommendations for the EU on the issues discussed.</p>
14.30 – 14.55 CEST	<p>Session 5: Engaging where it matters: Local, national and transnational dynamics (plenary session)</p> <p>In this plenary session, participants will be invited to build on the previous discussions, and to reflect on what are the commonalities and localised differences between regions in the Sahel and on how the EU should take them into consideration.</p>
14.55 – 15.00 CEST	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niels Bossen, Political Adviser (Office of the EUSR Sahel) • Sonya Reines-Djivanides, Executive Director (EPLO)

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace). It is managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The fourth phase of the CSDN will last from 2020 to 2023. For more information, please visit the [EPLO website](#).