

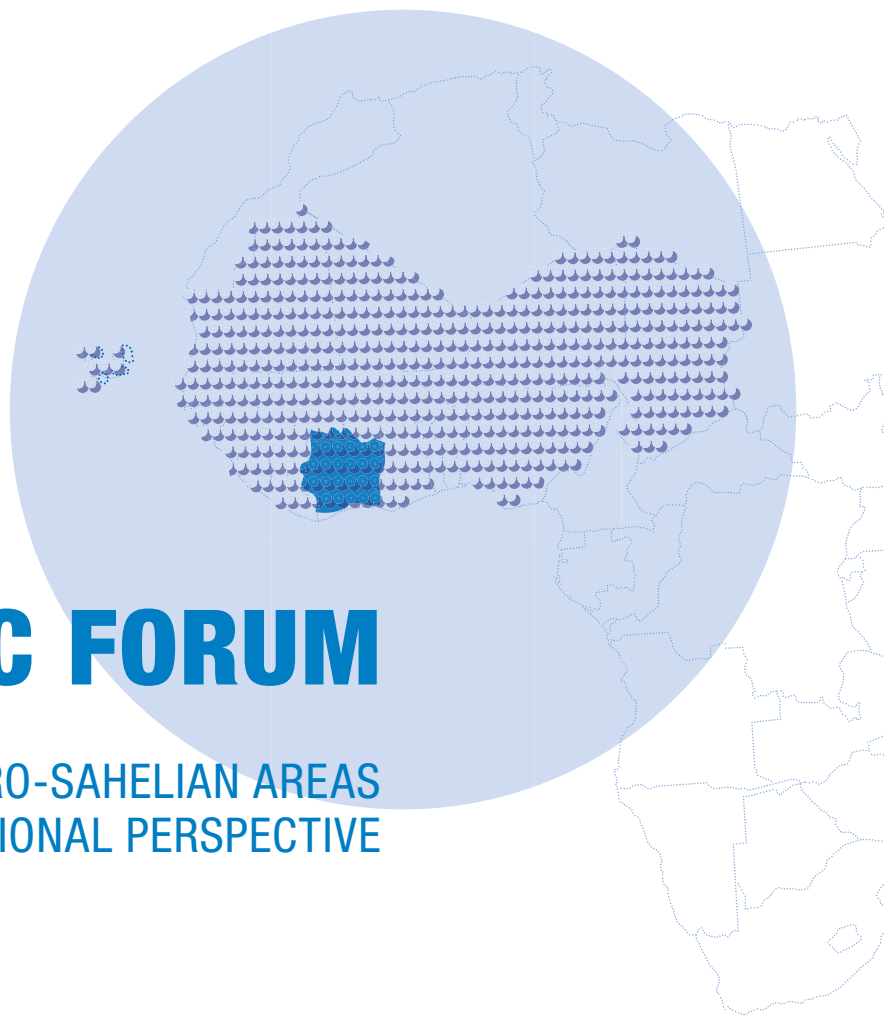
ABIDJAN CÔTE D'IVOIRE |  
25-29 NOVEMBER 2013

# SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA WEEK

28 NOVEMBER 2013 |

## SWAC FORUM

THE FUTURE OF THE SAHARO-SAHELIAN AREAS  
FROM A TRANS-REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE



# THE FUTURE OF THE SAHARO- SAHELIAN AREAS FROM A TRANS-REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

**28 NOVEMBER 2013,**  
**ABIDJAN CÔTE D'IVOIRE,**  
**GOLF HOTEL\***

This Forum is based on analytical work carried out by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC), under its “West African Futures” think tank programme, dedicated in 2013-2014 to the Saharo-Saharan areas.

The Forum’s aim is to illustrate the critical role that stronger co-operation between North, West and Central Africa can play in short- and long-term stabilisation and development of the Saharo-Saharan areas. Special attention will be paid to how sustainable and adequately adapted solutions must take into account differing and often overlapping levels of action.

The Forum takes place during the annual Sahel and West Africa Week of the SWAC<sup>1</sup> and it will gather political decision makers, representatives of international and regional organisations, researchers and local stakeholders.

The Forum will be structured into Presentations of research results, which will explore the political, security, economic and geographic characteristics of the Saharo-Saharan region<sup>2</sup>. These will be followed by Panels dedicated to political debate, in the interest of sharing knowledge and prompting informed and inclusive dialogue with participants. In each panel, three or four speakers will lead discussions on the need to revisit policies and practices to better tackle the socio-economic and security challenges of the region. Each panel will explore the overlapping geographic (local, national, regional, and their interlinkages) and time scales (short-, medium- and long-term) involved in current dynamics, challenges and solutions. Each panel will:

- assess “security and development” initiatives, their coherence and their capacity for intervention at the appropriate scale;
- exchange experiences among development and security experts, economic and policy actors, and researchers;
- discuss innovative forms of co-operation and sustainable solutions, and their mechanisms and scales of action, to promote development and security for the populations of the Saharo-Saharan areas.

1. The 2013 Sahel and West Africa Week takes place on 25-29 November 2013 and will host the 29th Annual Meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA), the Senior Experts Group Meeting of the Global Alliance for Resilience – Sahel and West Africa (AGIR), the Meeting of the Committee of the Partners of the Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the SWAC Forum and the meeting of the SWAC Strategy and Policy Group. The gathering is organised by the SWAC Secretariat with the support of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and in co-operation with the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and the CILSS Executive Secretariat.

2. The presentations are based on analytical work, the results of which will be published in the 2014 Atlas, under the “West African Studies” series.

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## TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

### GOLF HOTEL\* – ANONO ROOM

08.30	Opening
09.30 – 12.45	SESSION 1: POLITICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC TRENDS OF SAHARO-SAHELIAN AREAS
09.30 – 09.45	Presentation 1: Instability and regional geopolitics
09.45 – 10.10	Presentation 2: A geographic history based on mobility
10.25 – 10.40	Presentation 3: Nomadic communities and their socio-economic evolution
11.40 – 12.15	Panel 1: “Security and development” initiatives and transnational challenges; what are the views of the research community?
12.45 – 14.15	Lunch break
14.15 – 18.45	SESSION 2: ECONOMIC REALITIES, POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND OUTLOOK FOR CO-OPERATION IN THE SAHARO-SAHELIAN AREAS
14.15 – 14.30	Presentation 4: History of political and economic relations
14.30 – 15.00	Panel 2: How to strengthen economic relations between Saharo-Saharan countries?
16.00 – 16.45	Panel 3: How to articulate regional and international strategies?
17.45 – 18.30	Roundtable of Ministers
18.30	Closing

**08.00** Registration of Participants

**08.30** **Opening**

*François-Xavier de Donnea, President Sahel and West Africa Club*  
*Charles Koffi Diby, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Côte d'Ivoire*

**09.30 - 12.45** **SESSION 1: POLITICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC TRENDS OF SAHARO-SAHELIAN AREAS**

*Moderator: Santiago Martínez-Caro, Director-General of Casa África*

**09.30-09.45** **Presentation 1: Instability and regional geopolitics**

*Speaker: Olivier Walther, Visiting assistant professor at the Division of Global Affairs, Rutgers University (USA)*

Most past conflicts in the region were geographically localised; current crises, however, are transnational, pointing toward a transnational resolution. Does this by itself explain the intensity of current crises? After a review of the factors and actors involved, the implications of recent political events (coups d'état, revolutions) for the relations between North and West Africa will be discussed. Which responses fit which geographical dimensions? What is the role of borders?

**09.45-10.10** **Presentation 2: A geographic history based on mobility**

*Speakers: Denis Retaille, Professor at the University of Bordeaux/CNRS and Ali Bensaâd, Lecturer at the University of Aix-Marseille*

The growth and diversification of mobility in the Saharo-Sahelian region renew and multiply the junctures between the North African and Sahelian banks of the Sahara. What role do networks play in the development of mobility and how does mobility shape territories (structuring or destructuring)?

**10.10 – 10.25** Coffee break

**10.25 – 10.40** **Presentation 3: Nomadic communities and their socio-economic evolution**

*Speaker: Laurent Gagnol, Research associate at Laboratoire PACTE – UMR 5194, University J. Fourier of Grenoble*

Analysis of the identities and socio-political organisation of nomadic communities (pastoral, agro-pastoral, trader, caravanner, etc.) allows us to better understand the recent evolutions of their livelihoods. Yet, with their future dependent on regional and global challenges, these constantly evolving nomadic communities are important factors in the stability of the region. How can we transform risks into opportunities in the effort to consolidate relations between North and West Africa?

**10.40 – 11.40** Debates

**11.40 – 12.15** **Panel 1: “Security and development” initiatives and transnational challenges; what are the views of the research community?**

*Moderator: Santiago Martínez-Caro, Director-General of Casa África*

*Speakers: Lori-Anne Thérault-Bénoni, Senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies Dakar Office, Salim Chena, Associate editor of Dynamiques internationales, and Peter Cole, Consultant*

Question for the panel: Are the political dialogue and action mechanisms of the “Sahel strategies” and “security and development” initiatives in the region adapted (temporally, geographically, and operationally) to current tensions?

**12.15 – 12.45** Debates

**12.45 – 14.15** Lunch break

**14.15 – 18.45      SESSION 2: ECONOMIC REALITIES, POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND OUTLOOK FOR CO-OPERATION IN THE SAHARO-SAHELIAN AREAS**

*Moderator: Djimé Adoum, Executive Secretary of CILSS*

**14.15 – 14.30      Presentation 4: History of political and economic relations**

*Speaker: Antonin Tisseron, Research fellow at the Thomas More Institute*

Since the end of the 1990s, a renewed interest among North African countries in their southern neighbours can be observed, in the form of economic and trade agreements, security co-operation, and regional organisations. Nevertheless, trans-Saharan trade remains weak. How to construct or reconstruct a common space?

**14.30 – 15.00      Panel 2: How to strengthen economic relations between Saharo-Sahelian countries?**

*Moderator: Djimé Adoum, Executive Secretary of CILSS*

*Speakers: François Yatta, United Cities and Local Governments Africa (UCLG)*

*Mohamed Ayadi, Secretary General Trans-Saharan Road Liaison Committee*

Questions for the panel: What medium- and long-term economic interests do the countries on the two banks of the Sahara share? What potentials can they rely on, where to invest, and what dialogue mechanisms should be used for an adequate and sustainable response? What is the political outlook for trans-saharan co-operation?

**15.00 – 15.45      Debates**

**15.45 – 16.00      Coffee break**

**16.00 – 16.45      Panel 3: How to articulate regional and international strategies?**

*Moderator: Michel Reveyard de Menthon, Special Representative of the European Union for the Sahel, (EEAS, European External Action Service)*

*Speakers: Ibrahima Bocar Ba, Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy (ECOWAS Commission),*

*Cheikhe Hadjibou Soumaré, President UEMOA Commission,*

*Pierre Buyoya, High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel,*

*United Nations Representative,*

*Tarek Letaief, Director Political Affairs, Information and Chief of Staff Arab Maghreb Union (tbc)*

Panelists from international and regional organisations will discuss how shared co-operation can be built on the basis of existing and future initiatives. In particular, the panel will discuss the spatial and temporal dimensions to be considered and how they can be integrated and operationalised in security and development activities.

**16.45 – 17.45      Debates**

**17.45 – 18.30      Roundtable of Ministers**

*Moderator: Yipènè Djibrill Bassolé, Speakers: Charles Koffi Diby, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Côte d'Ivoire,*

*Mohamed Bazoum, Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration Niger,*

*Soumeylou Boubéye Maïga, Minister of Defense Mali (tbc),*

*Moussa Faki Mahamat, Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration Chad*

*Thomas Palé, Minister Delegate attached to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Co-operation Burkina Faso*

**18.30              Closing**

*François-Xavier de Donnea, President Sahel and West Africa Club*

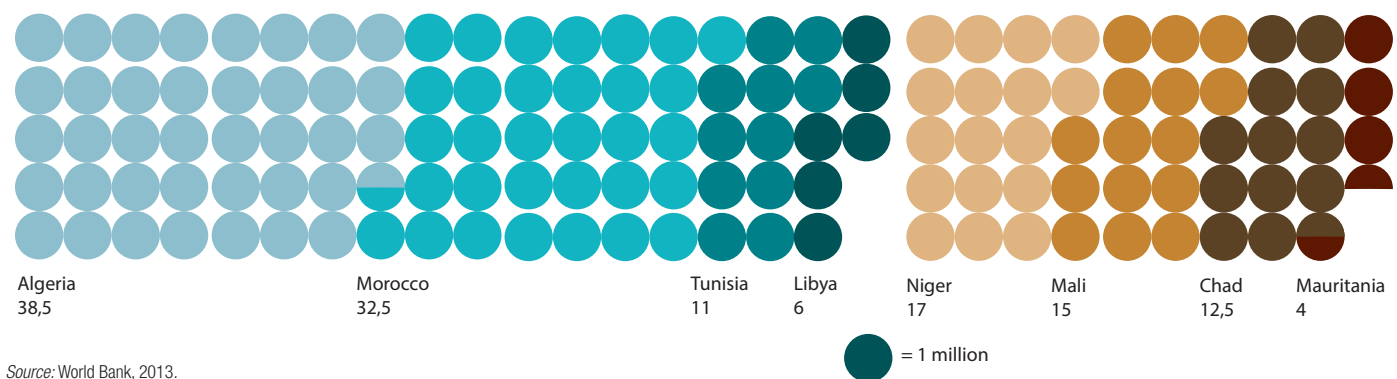
# FACTS AND ANALYSES <sup>3</sup>

The following sections are based on work co-ordinated by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat. The complete work will be published in the “Atlas of Saharo-Sahelian areas” in 2014.

## THE SAHARO-SAHELIAN AREA

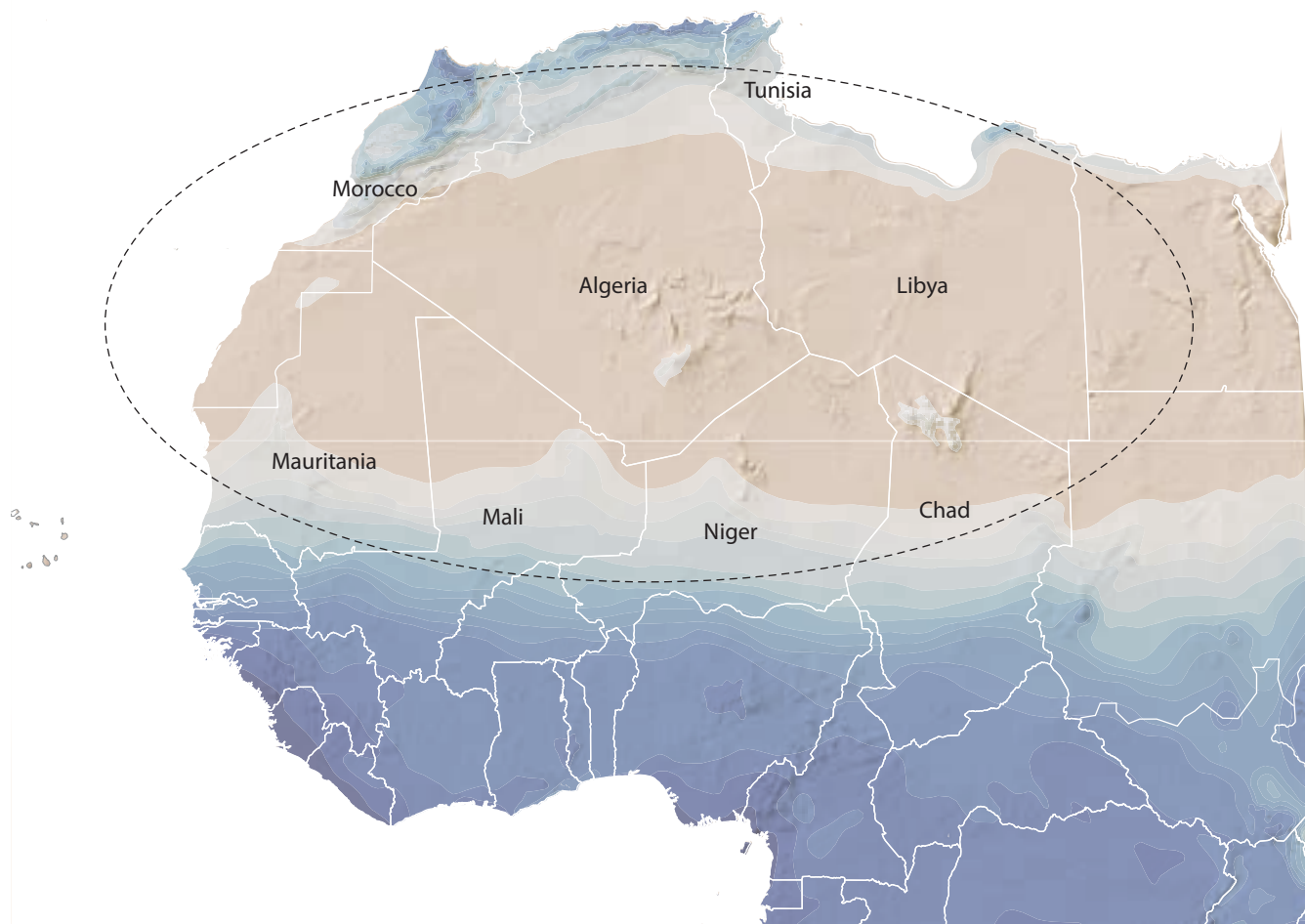
For the purposes of the West African Futures (WAF) programme, the Saharo-Sahelian areas have been defined as the Sahara desert and its neighbouring shrub-steppe areas; the areas are bound by the Mediterranean region to the North and by the humid tropical areas to the South, stretching from the mouth of the Senegal River to Lake Chad. The area is centred on the Sahara, and although it extends from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, the area does not include Egypt or Sudan. It runs through Algeria, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia. For West Africa, the Saharo-Sahelian areas account for 40% of the total land area of ECOWAS (as well as 50% and 70% for UEMOA and CILSS, respectively); for 5% of the regional population (15 million people); and less than 3% of the regional GDP. As the discussions will show, a variety of scales of analysis are possible, depending on the focus. These may include political (e.g., the Malian crisis), economic (e.g., regional trade and trade corridors), historical or ethno-linguistic.

**FIGURE 1. TOTAL POPULATION OF SAHARO-SAHELIAN COUNTRIES (2012)**



3. Excerpted from the work of, *inter alia*, S. Clairet, D. Retailié, A. Tisseron and O. Walther, carried out in conjunction with the forthcoming SWAC/OECD publication, *West African Futures*.

**MAP 1. THE SAHARO-SAHELIAN AREAS**



## MAGHREB AND SAHEL: HISTORICAL TIES AND INCOMPLETE CO-OPERATION

The dissemination of cultural, religious and linguistic schools of thought and the flow of people and trade are examples of the age-old ties that exist between North Africa and the Sahel. In the Middle Ages, the Sahara was criss-crossed and structured by caravans and trade routes. One such route has linked Tahert, Algeria to Gao, Mali since the middle of the eighth century AD. Another route emerged between Sijilmasa, Morocco and Koumbi Saleh in southern Mauritania. To the East, Egypt has been linked with Gao since the ninth century AD by routes running along Lake Chad or Cyrenaica before going deep into the desert. Another route runs from Libya's Gulf of Sidra to Gao via Fezzan, Tassili n'Ajjer, the Hoggar Mountains and the Adrar des Ifoghas.

Ancient cities, such as Timbuktu and Djenné, flourished from this trade. Further East, Agadez, Zinder, Katsina and Kano became vital hubs for trading networks and the flow of goods and people between the Hausa region and Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

For European colonisers, the Sahara was of little economic interest. This lack of vision was reflected in how territories were administratively organised. After division amongst the multiple powers, the French Sahara was made up of three main territories: the territories of southern Algeria (the départements of Oases and Soura), French West Africa (Mali and Niger) and French Equatorial Africa (Chad, Congo, Gabon and what is now the Central African Republic). As a result, the Saharo-Sahelian regions were politically separated from North Africa. In terms of economic development, desert areas were neglected, as attention was focused on the Mediterranean coastline and the Sahelian areas, that were linked to southern port cities. Trade across the Sahara was thus refocused on regional and local scales. The economic reach was abbreviated, with trade becoming predominantly driven by pastoral mobility, regional solidarities and reciprocal obligations.

After independence, however, the countries of the Maghreb started developing relations with their southern neighbours. These ambitions, which unfolded simultaneously with the development of the natural resources of the desert, were underlined by the various Arab-African co-operation efforts driven by diverse motivations within a context of decolonisation, the African unity movement and cold war fault lines. Two types of policies emerged.

The first type of policies, characterised by Morocco and Tunisia, were aligned with Western positions and struggled to thrive. The second type of policies, characterised by Algeria and Libya, embodied ambitious and uniquely African policies. For instance, Algeria's African policy and its economic expansion towards its southern neighbours were integral parts of an African post-independence socio-economic development discourse. What's more, Colonel Gaddafi espoused a pan-Arab policy and launched numerous bilateral accords. Beginning in 1974, a series of agreements were signed with African countries to create joint Libyan-African commissions – agreements that were later strained by conflict, particularly by the dispute with Chad over the Aouzou Strip. The final settlement of the conflict between Chad and Libya, marked by Libya's acceptance in April 1994 of the International Court of Justice in The Hague's verdict which attributed sovereignty over the Aouzou Strip to Chad, enabled the border to be reopened and cross-border trade to be resumed.

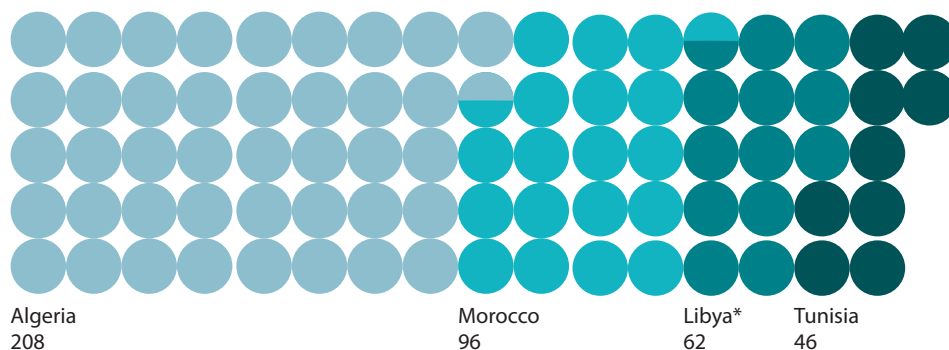
At the same time, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia also strengthened their relations with sub-Saharan Africa. The increasing competition on European markets helped motivate a reorientation of Maghreb trade relations, particularly towards southern sub-Saharan Africa. Initially, this renewal of relations was translated by the development of bilateral co-operation arrangements (joint commissions), by numerous official visits to West African countries by government officials and business leaders, and by the establishment of national interests in the economies of sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the demand for low-skilled labour in the southern areas of Algeria and Libya encouraged regular labour migration from their southern neighbours.



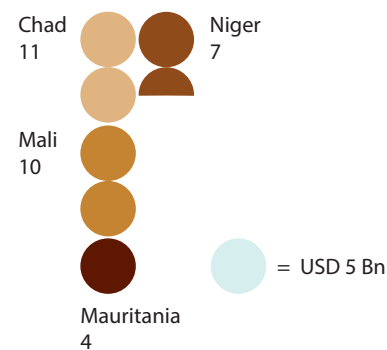
**FIGURE 2. GDP OF THE SAHARO-SAHELIAN COUNTRIES (2012)**

\* Libya 2009

### North Africa ( USD 412 billion)



### Sahel (USD 32 billion)



Source: World Bank 2013

A number of major development projects were launched, including: the road linking Tangier, Nouakchott and Dakar (which should ultimately be extended to Lagos); investments in telecommunications infrastructure linking Morocco and West Africa; the port of Tangier-Med; the Trans-Sahara interconnection; and the proposed gas pipeline between Algeria and Nigeria. However, on the whole, the Maghreb and the Sahel are still insufficiently connected, with some exceptions in the northern border regions of a few Sahelian countries, such as northern Niger, with cross-border Libyan influence, or northern Mali, with Algerian influence.

Illegal activities also account for some share of economic activity in the region, as the Sahara interconnections are favoured trafficking routes for drugs, arms, migrants and various consumption goods. The subsidisation and protectionist policies of Algeria and Libya in particular present important opportunities to sell subsidised products on the other side of the border, to avoid customs duties, to evade import and export bans and to avoid problems related to the non-convertibility of Maghreb currencies.

Despite the states' shared desire to develop trade and the dynamism of the informal economy, relations amongst the countries of the Sahara have remained limited since decolonisation. And yet, there remain many factors of convergence, including: the struggle against armed factions and trafficking; the presence of sub-Saharan migrants in North Africa; new communication and trade infrastructures; emerging economic opportunities; and the collective challenges posed by the development of the Maghreb and Sahelian states.

**TABLE 1. BILATERAL AGREEMENTS SIGNED BY MOROCCO WITH AFRICAN PARTNERS**

PARTNER	TYPE OF AGREEMENT	DATE
Algeria	Trade and tariff treaty	14 March 1989
Benin	Trade agreement	7 March 1991
Burkina Faso	Trade agreement	29 June 1996
Chad	Convention commerciale et tarifaire	4 December 1997 (lists not yet established)
Côte d'Ivoire	Trade agreement	5 May 1995
Egypt	Free trade agreement	25 May 1998
Equatorial Guinea	Trade agreement	12 September 1986
Guinea	Trade and tariff treaty	12 April 1997
Libya	Trade and tariff treaty	26 June 1990
Mali	Trade agreement	17 September 1987
Mauritania	Trade and tariff agreement	4 August 1986
Niger	Trade agreement	7 November 1982
Nigeria	Trade agreement	4 April 1977
Senegal	Trade agreement Additional protocol	13 February 1963 26 March 1981
Sudan	Trade and tariff agreement Additional protocol	19 June 1975 9 December 1982
Tunisia	Free trade agreement	16 March 1999

Sources: Moroccan Ministry of Industry, Trade and New Technologies and the Moroccan International Chamber of Commerce.

**TABLE 2. BILATERAL AGREEMENTS SIGNED BY TUNISIA WITH AFRICAN PARTNERS**

PARTNER	TYPE OF AGREEMENT	DATE
Algeria	Trade and tariff treaty Additional protocol	21 March 1981 15 May 1991
Benin	Trade agreement	4 June 1993
Burkina Faso	Trade agreement	7 January 1993
Chad	Trade agreement	12 June 2003
Côte d'Ivoire	Trade agreement	16 May 1995
Egypt	Treaty to create a free trade area	5 March 1998
Gambia	Trade agreement	21 June 2000
Guinea	Trade agreement	15 January 1993
Liberia	Trade agreement	29 April 1965
Libya	Treaty to create a free trade area	26 November 2001
Mali	Trade agreement	1 July 1986
Mauritania	Trade agreement Additional protocol	25 September 1964 28 February 1986
Morocco	Treaty to create a free trade area	16 March 1999
Niger	Trade agreement Additional protocol	30 September 1982 5 June 1992
Nigeria	Trade agreement	27 June 2001
Senegal	Trade agreement Additional protocol	30 March 1962 4 February 1997
Togo	Trade agreement	16 May 1996

Source: Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Centre (Tunisia).

## PRE-COLONIAL EMPIRES AND ROUTE EMPIRES

The pre-colonial empires of the Maghreb and Sahelian regions were all route empires. They succeeded each other in the function of ensuring the security and permanence of trans-Sahara passage in the context of sparse human settlement and remote trading posts, which later became oasis towns.

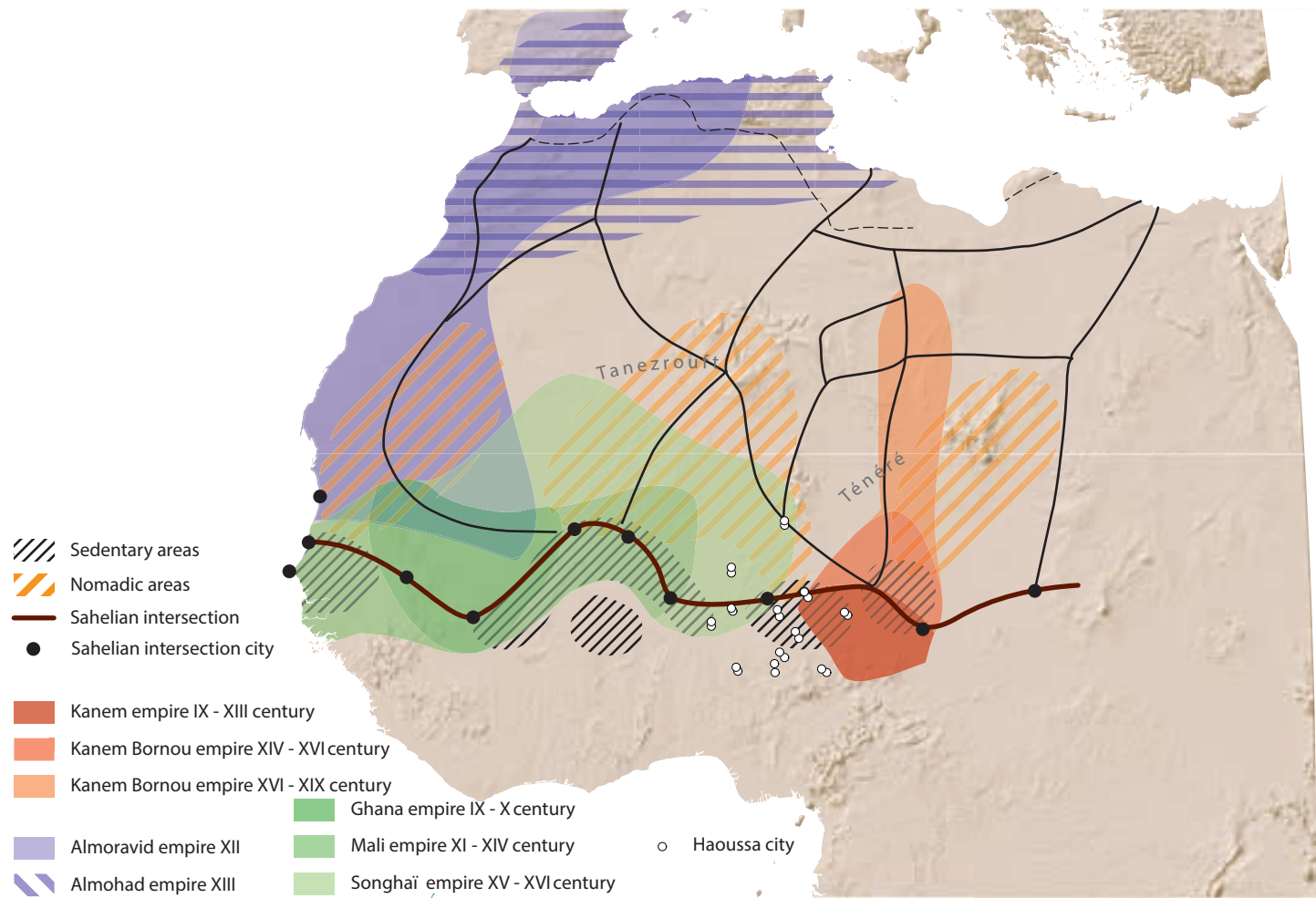
The following examples illustrate the regions' deep connections to their ancient routes:

*The Garamantes route also served as a pilgrimage route from Senegal and Niger to Egypt. Further South, a route along the lakes, which was also the route of the neolithisation from the Nile, followed a path that later became the Fula route – the lawol pulaku, meaning both the search for pastures and correct behaviour.*

*One of the most enduring empires was that of the Kanem, and later the Kanem-Bornu (tenth to nineteenth centuries AD), which centred on Lake Chad and controlled the route leading to the Fezzan, the main Saharan crossroad, via the Ténéré (the desert of the desert, like the Tanezrouft). The empire was entirely linked to the mobility provided by the Tedda (Toubou) people, who were at the origin of the Kanem Empire. The shift of power to Bornu in the sixteenth century AD did not so much constitute a break as a coalition with the Hausa cities located at the Songhai Empire's easternmost trade route.*

*The Songhai Empire, centred on Gao, was the last heir to the Niger River-based empires. Like the Kanem-Fezzan path via the Ténéré, this route crossed the Sahara's most inhospitable terrain. The Songhai Empire, which succeeded the Mali Empire, continued to enable Saharan mobility at a time when the Maghreb still had not regained its stability after the Almohad, even despite the Ottoman regency.*

MAP 2. ROUTE EMPIRES



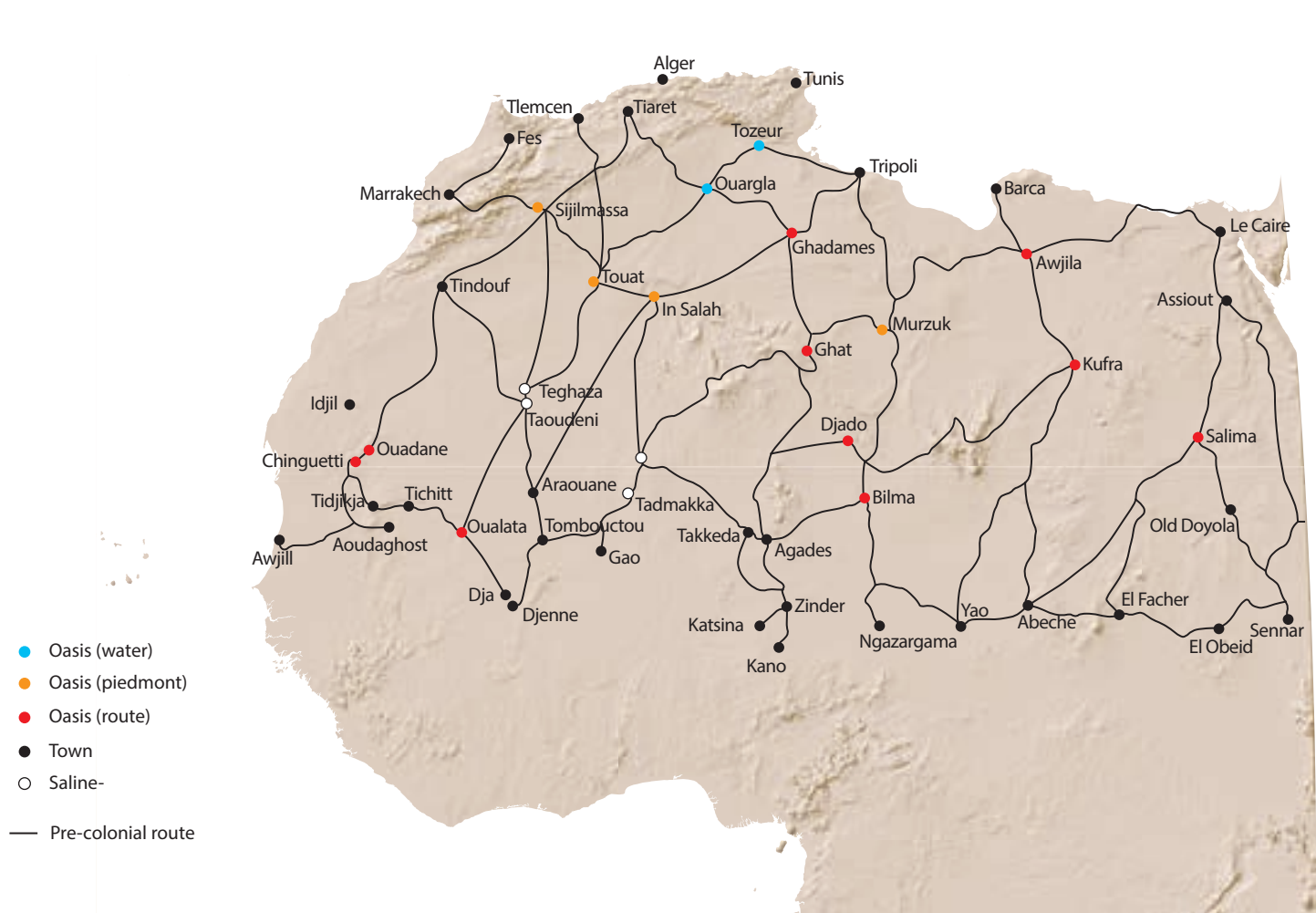
Each of the states of the Saharo-Sahelian region, whose borders were drawn according to the colonial conception of the territory reflected the combination of a sedentary core and a route. Against this background, the Saharo-Sahelian area is shared by four zones: (1) Mauritania-Senegal, with their shared Senegal river; (2) Mali, centred on the Niger River; (3) Niger, initially linked to the network of Hausa cities before also being linked to the Songhai-Djerma River; and (4) Chad and Lake Chad. Throughout the geographical history of these zones that make up the Saharo-Sahelian areas, the nomadic and sedentary groups have remained in permanent contact – not separated by latitudinal boundaries based on measures of aridity.

Hence, while the division into geographical regions via implicit borders was necessary, these ancient trade routes have continued to provide connections that have remained unchanged for centuries.

The main trans-Saharan trade routes run diagonally, linking the bends of Senegal and Niger Rivers to the Mediterranean, to the Nile and to the Middle East. Another diagonal route links Lake Chad to the Nile. These diagonal routes are thousands of years old and attest to the people's enduring resistance to aridification by mobility. The diagonal routes were complemented over time by vertical routes, which testify to a projection across a space without continuous human settlement. The connections between settlements on the northern and southern edges of the desert drove the establishment of routes and trading posts. Based on social and political considerations, oases were established by literally relocating populations from outside the desert. Contrary to common belief, oases were not built where water was found; rather, they were located at the junctions of trade routes, and water needed to be found subsequently. In the desert, one does not live off the offerings of the desert, but off trade.

Today, however, the majority of the Sahara-Sahelian population is considered to be farmers and pastoralists. Still, the Saharo-Sahelian zones, purely defined on rainfall isohyets, remain a land of towns and roads. Human settlement in the areas is it not driven by claiming land and borders, but by the conjugation of roads and towns.

MAP 3. PRE-COLONIAL ROUTES



**BOX 1. LINES IN THE SAND: MODERN-DAY SOURCES OF STRIFE**

Not all borders of the modern Saharo-Sahelian states were drawn arbitrarily. Some follow boundaries that pre-date European colonisation, such as the northern delineations between Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. South of the Sahara, the artificiality of borders frequently masks negotiations between colonial powers, which, in some cases, sought to divide longstanding rival political entities. Such was the case of the border between Niger and Nigeria, which separated political entities that had been permanently incorporated into the Sokoto caliphate from peripheral entities such as Maradi and Zinder. This was also the case with the southern border between Nigeria and Benin; the border between the kingdoms of Yoruba and Dahomey; and the border between Burkina Faso and Mali, which separated the Fula people of Mali from the Mossi. Today's African borders integrate political groupings that are unprecedented and vaster in size than pre-colonial political formations. For instance, the Saharo-Sahelian states of today resulted from an incorporation of multiple agro-climatic areas with complementary agricultural and pastoral aptitude, as decided by various political entities.

Interestingly, it is not the arbitrary and artificial nature of Africa's borders that has incited the border disputes of the past 50 years. Rather, it is the imprecision of historical delineations that ignore traditional political leanings. Nine cases have given rise to advisory opinions or rulings by the International Court of Justice, the oldest of which concerned Western Sahara (1975) and the most recent of which concerned the border between Burkina Faso and Niger (2013).

Such tensions impede the functioning of regional blocs designed to facilitate regional integration via the free movement of goods and persons, such as ECOWAS and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). Of the intergovernmental organisations, only the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), currently being restructured in the wake of the Libyan crisis, and the African Union (AU), of which Morocco is not a member, transcend the colonisation-induced division between the two shores of the Sahara.

On the other hand, for rebels, religious extremists, migrants, refugees and some traders, the existence of national borders is more often a resource than a constraint. The vitality of transnational solidarity networks testifies to their capacity to adapt to the uncertainty that characterises the Sahara-Sahelian's political, economic and ecological environments. To some extent, this traffic escapes control by the states, which often lack the resources to administer all of their territory and which, in some instances, are dependent on border-related revenues. To date, the development of these operational border dynamics, which are based on extreme mobility, was hardly ever accompanied by the creation of local cross-border institutions adapted to the settlement basins of Saharo-Sahelian populations.

## PAST AND PRESENT POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Over the past 50 years, recurrent episodes of violence have shaken the Sahara-Sahelian areas. States have competed for control over their respective boundaries; they have fought secessionist and extremist movements; and they have had to cope with the toppling of regimes. Never before has the intensity of this violence been so great. The situation today is distinctive insofar as the number of armed conflicts in Africa as a whole has actually been declining since 2000. Furthermore, most past conflicts were geographically localised, while current crises have taken on a cross-border dimension that makes any settlement contingent on regional solutions.

Between 1960 and 1970, the Sahara-Sahelian areas experienced a period of stability; although punctuated by coups d'état in Algeria, Mali and Niger, but without large-scale tensions. The subsequent 20 years saw the advent of conflicts in the Western Sahara and along Libya's borders, which were the main hotspots of political tensions. For instance, the invasion of the Aouzou Strip pit Libya against Chad from 1973 until 1981. At the same time, the Western Sahara conflict opposed Algeria, Mauritania and Morocco and the Polisario Front. The 1980s were also marked by multiple border conflicts, including those of Burkina Faso and Mali in 1985-86 and Nigeria and Chad in 1987. In the early 1990s, the Algerian civil war broke out, which pitted the government against Islamist groups. Meanwhile, tensions flared in Mali and Niger ending in 1995. The Sahara-Sahelian areas then enjoyed relative stability. Another exception was Chad, which experienced violent conflicts from 1990 to 1994, 1997 to 2002, and 2005 to 2009. This uneasy stability ended in the mid-2000s, when virtually all Saharo-Sahelian countries were affected by conflicts or political instability of one sort or another, with coups d'état in Mauritania, Mali and Niger. The so-called "Arab Spring", beginning in late 2010, also led to a resurgence of political violence and religious extremism.

This deterioration in security conditions stems from a combination of factors, the most recent of which was the settling of Islamist groups in northern Mali starting around 2003, particularly the Salafist Group for Preaching and

Combat (GSPC), an Algerian faction that later changed its name to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). In 2012, a circumstantial alliance between Islamist groups and Touareg rebels cleared the way for a conflict unprecedented in its geographic scale – with Bamako losing control of over 60% of Mali's territory – and the diversity of state and non-state actors involved. Although this conflict clearly has a cross-border dimension and calls for a regional, if not international, solution, the response has been slow. Is the intervention and co-ordination scaled appropriately?

The resurgence of tensions in the Saharo-Sahelian areas disrupts the economic activities of local operators as well as multinational enterprises, which are particularly targeted by kidnappers. The Sahara's mining and oil facilities have become bastions besieged by armed factions that, for the first time in the history of some states, have carried-out suicide attacks. Meanwhile, the once-flourishing tourism industry is on the decline. The humanitarian situation is critical, particularly in terms of food crises in areas inaccessible by international aid, such as Kidal. For instance, the conflict in Mali alone is believed to have caused the internal and international displacement of over 350 000 persons.

Identifying the various existing "Sahel strategies" is a difficult undertaking given the region's tentative coherence in terms of objectives, geographical mandates and activities. However, a recent study has highlighted the following six regional strategies:

1. The European Union's Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel (2011), which covers Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Notably, this strategy underlines the fact that the area's problems can also affect Burkina Faso and Chad, and that correlations with the situation in North Africa exist.
2. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (2013), which covers five Sahelian countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. In July 2013, the UN Security Council emphasised "the importance of a co-ordinated approach by all concerned United Nations entities involved in the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for enhanced co-operation with a view of maximizing synergies. The Security Council requests



the Secretary-General to ensure effective implementation of the United Nations Strategy through close collaboration between the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel region, UNOWA and relevant United Nations entities working in the Sahel region, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime." This appears to have expanded the spectrum of action to encompass security and development.

- 3.** The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Sahel Regional Strategy (2013), which is based on the humanitarian needs expressed in the consolidated appeals of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, as well as on the humanitarian strategies of Cameroon, Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal.
- 4.** The African Union's Strategic Concept for the Resolution of the Crises in Mali (2012), which is a recent resolution that is national in scope. Yet, on 30 January 2013, the African Union appointed Mr. Pierre Buyoya as their High Representative for Mali and the Sahel.
- 5.** The West Africa Regional Coherence and Action Programme for Stability and Development in the Saharo-Sahelian Areas, which is advocated by ECOWAS in co-operation with UEMOA and CILSS. This initiative is ongoing.
- 6.** The European Union-led Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) – Sahel and West Africa (2012), which has a platform facilitated by the SWAC/OECD and is under the leadership of West African regional organisations. This initiative focuses on food security.

The common feature of these initiatives is that they each concern at least one Sahelian country and seemingly take on some sort of "security and development" dimensions – but clearly within a context of increased stability. However, there is some difficulty in classifying the various initiatives that are underway, and there is a need for an overall vision.

It seems important to also consider other initiatives during the Forum, including (but not limited to): the Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in northern Mali (PSPSDN) and the Regional Command for Joint Counter-Terrorism Operations (CEMOC), whose member states are Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. It should also be noted that Mauritania has a new multi-pronged counter-terrorism strategy encompassing religion, culture, education, communication, politics, justice, defence and security. Similarly, Niger has recently adopted a development and security strategy.

These recently launched global and regional initiatives herald the beginning of the international community's commitment to stand alongside certain West African governments. Examples include the joint ECOWAS/UN inter-institutional West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI) against organised transnational crime, as well as and the adoption by the UN's General Assembly on 8 September 2006 of a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. At the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, reaffirmed the structural linkages between peace/security and development. In addition, at the Forum's recent fourth session, it was decided to renew the mandates of Algeria and Canada as co-chairs of the Sahel Working Group for 2013-2014. This effort towards ensuring coherence in security and development activities at the institutional level is a major milestone in co-operation with West Africa.

4. African Union's Strategic Concept for the Resolution of the Crises in Mali.  
5. The Economic Community of West African States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA CLUB is a group of West African regional organisations, countries and international organisations that work together towards the development and integration of the West African region.

THE CLUB WAS CREATED IN 1976 at the initiative of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), several Sahelian, West African and OECD member countries. Following the 1973 devastating drought in the Sahel, the initial aim of the Club was to mobilise international support for the region. In 2001, the Club extended its coverage from the Sahel to all of West Africa. Since its creation, the Club has contributed to significant advances in regional and international policies for West Africa.

THE CLUB IS A THINK-AND-DO-TANK that undertakes independent and forward-looking analysis, devises guidelines and policy tools for Members and other stakeholders, and promotes policy dialogue to feed international debates and contribute to the creation of regional policies for the future. The Club encourages a shared understanding of critical regional issues by building connections between national and regional, regional and global, policy and practice, West African institutions and the international community.

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