



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

Strategy

Strategy for Norway's efforts in the Sahel region (2024–2030)



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1 Summary

The situation in the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad) has deteriorated significantly in recent years as a result of a series of military coups, geopolitical rivalries, anti-Western rhetoric and increasingly complex security challenges. The civilian population has been hit hard by violent extremism and the impacts of climate change. The scale of humanitarian needs has increased considerably. All these factors are affecting the framework conditions for Norway's engagement. The overall aim of the new Strategy for Norway's efforts in the Sahel region is to promote action to reverse the current negative trends, while at the same time paving the way for long-term sustainable development in the region. Norwegian support will primarily be channelled through multilateral institutions and civil society organisations. The new strategy also has a broader regional focus, with the Embassy in Dakar serving as a hub.

2 Introduction

The Sahel region has undergone dramatic changes in recent years, which in turn have created more challenging framework conditions for Norway's engagement. The terrorism threat has become more complex, a series of military coups have taken place, the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has been closed down, regional cooperation arenas are under pressure, and the Mali peace agreement (Algiers Accord) has been terminated. Over the past few years, the Sahel region has gained greater geopolitical significance, and increasing importance is being attached to the region's location in NATO's southern flank. All this has had implications for Norway's efforts in the region, and a new strategy is therefore needed.

Violent extremism, coups d'état, weak governance, increased geopolitical rivalries and polarisation, anti-Western rhetoric, and detrimental Russian interference and military engagement are among the challenges currently affecting the region. Underlying factors such as persistent poverty, food insecurity, lack of development and the impacts of climate change further exacerbate the situation. These challenges give rise to conflicts, increased human suffering and a heightened risk of irregular migration. The situation will deteriorate further if these challenges spread to the coastal states. All this affects Norwegian interests.

In the short term, the main focus of Norway's engagement is to promote effective action to reverse the current negative trends, address humanitarian challenges, enhance food security, increase stabilisation, and improve local capacity to combat violent extremism. At the same time, it is vital to facilitate long-term sustainable development and strengthen the rule of law, democratic development, human rights and gender equality. These efforts are also important in countering irregular migration. The security situation is volatile, making it difficult for personnel on the ground to carry out their work. The presence of non-democratic governments poses challenges to direct development cooperation. For this reason, Norwegian support for efforts in the Sahel will be channelled to a greater extent through civil society organisations and multilateral institutions. With the establishment of the Embassy in Dakar, Norway's engagement in the region will have a broader regional focus.

Norway has been engaged in the Sahel for decades and has provided substantial humanitarian and development assistance to the region. This engagement began in the 1980s with an initiative to enhance food security in parts of the region. Norway has expertise that may be of relevance, including relating to local climate-resilient food production, education and energy. The Sahel is one of the regions in the world that is most vulnerable to climate change, with drought, flooding, and sand and dust storms becoming increasingly widespread. Norway's forest conservation efforts in Africa can affect rainfall, which is crucial for food production. Norway's engagement in the Sahel has been welcomed by our partners.

The political dimension of this engagement was brought to the fore by the coup d'état in Mali in 2012 and the terrorist attack in In Amenas in spring 2013. Like its close partners, Norway sought to develop an integrated approach to the challenges in the Sahel region aimed at addressing the underlying causes of poverty, instability

and extremism. In 2018, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its first strategy for Norway's efforts in the Sahel. This was renewed in 2021 and was intended to cover the five-year period 2021–2025. In the strategy, priority was given to Norway's participation in the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and consolidation of the Mali peace agreement. Since 2021, the parameters for Norway's engagement have changed dramatically. As a consequence of this, Norway closed its Embassy in Bamako in Mali in December 2023 and opened a new Embassy in Dakar in Senegal in September 2024.

In light of the increasingly transnational nature of the challenges in the region, the revised strategy attaches greater importance to the need for a regional approach. The main focus will continue to be on the five countries that previously made up the G5 Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad), but the strategy now also highlights the need for more preventive efforts in the coastal states. 'Coastal states' here refers to the Western African countries that share borders with the G5 Sahel countries.

The strategy is structured around three priority focus areas, with deliverables under each of them. The strategy outlines who Norway aims to work with (partnerships) and also discusses risks and dilemmas that may affect Norway's engagement moving forward.

The Sahel strategy is based on the objectives set out in the new *Strategy for Norwegian engagement with African countries* and must be viewed as a part of Norway's overall efforts in Africa. The strategy is also in line with other relevant policy documents, such as *Combining forces against hunger – a policy to improve food self-sufficiency*, Norway's strategy for promoting food security in development policy; *Climate change, hunger and vulnerability*, Strategy for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and the fight against hunger; Norway's National Action Plan: Women, Peace and Security (2023–2030); *A just world is an equal world*, Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Norway's Foreign and Development Policy (2023–2030); the strategic framework for Norway's efforts in countries and regions affected by conflict and fragility (Norwegian only) and *Norway's Humanitarian Strategy* (2024–2029).

The revised Sahel strategy will apply for the period 2024–2030.

3 Priority focus areas and deliverables

Norwegian interests

The Sahel is part of the European neighbourhood. Developments in the region have an impact on Norwegian interests. In light of the current negative trends in many areas in the Sahel, it has been necessary to update our strategy and our approach to the region.

It is in Norway's interests to:

- ☀ promote democratic development, human rights and gender equality, good governance and domestic resource mobilisation;
- ☀ enhance the capacity of the countries of the region to prevent and combat violent extremism as well as serious transnational organised crime and corruption;
- ☀ save lives, alleviate need, protect human dignity and rights, and ensure that humanitarian aid reaches crisis-affected populations;
- ☀ promote food security and work to ensure that the civilian population has access to basic services such as health and education;
- ☀ work to counter irregular migration as well as any moves towards undermining the institution of asylum, and help as many people as possible in their local communities;
- ☀ help to build resilient local communities that can, among other things, deliver social services and take action to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Overall objectives and priority focus areas

Developments and challenges in the Sahel transcend national borders, and the need for greater focus on the regional dimension has become increasingly evident in recent years. In response to the changing framework conditions, Norway has had to review and adapt its efforts and working methods. The strategy is intended to promote action to prevent the spread of uncertainty, conflict and instability in the Sahel and coastal states. The challenges the region is facing are transnational in nature, and the new strategy therefore has a broader regional focus.

The long-term vision for Norway's engagement in the Sahel is to promote the establishment of a stable region characterised by good governance and inclusive sustainable development. However, realising this vision will take time.

The new strategy covers the period until 2030, in line with the timeframe for the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The overall aim is to help to reverse the negative spiral now being seen in the Sahel and some of the coastal states. Unforeseen events, both positive and negative, may occur, which may in turn influence developments in the region. Over the next few years, the Sahel region will have to respond to pressing needs in the humanitarian sector as well as address urgent challenges in the areas of security, stabilisation and governance. It is crucial to ensure that short-term efforts also lay the foundation for long-term sustainable development in the region. This will affect the deliverables under the current strategy.

The strategy sets out three priority focus areas:

1. Humanitarian response and sustainable development:

Respond to humanitarian needs, build resilience at the local level, counter irregular migration and promote inclusive sustainable development.

2. Peacebuilding and stabilisation:

Work to prevent and combat violent extremism, and promote peacebuilding, stabilisation and the participation of women and young people in efforts relating to peace and security.

3. Democracy and gender equality:

Promote good governance, domestic resource mobilisation, democratic development, human rights and gender equality.

The strategy will be followed up in cooperation with partners at the country, regional and international levels. Cooperation with the UN system will be vital for following up activities in all three priority focus areas. The European dimension of Norway's efforts in the Sahel region is also crucial. In the current geopolitical situation, it is in Norway's interests to work with close allies and like-minded countries to counteract forces that see it as advantageous to perpetuate instability in the Sahel in order to destabilise Europe.

Implementation of the strategy will require Norway to take a multi-faceted approach. Funding will need to be allocated to achieve some of the deliverables under the priority focus areas, whereas the emphasis for others will be on Norway's active role in promoting values and political priorities in multilateral forums, in

dialogue with the authorities in the relevant countries and in contact with civil society organisations.

The three priority focus areas are clearly interlinked. Progress in one area will be dependent on and will help to advance progress in the others. It is important to ensure effective coordination between humanitarian action and efforts to promote long-term sustainable development, security, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

This strategy is intended to be a dynamic, flexible document. The priority focus areas will remain constant, but the deliverables will have to be adapted to developments in the region as they unfold. A more detailed description of the deliverables under each of the priority focus areas is provided below.

Priority focus areas and deliverables

1. Humanitarian response and sustainable development:

Respond to humanitarian needs, build resilience at the local level, counter irregular migration, and promote inclusive sustainable development.

The coups d'état that have taken place in a number of Sahel countries, combined with challenges affecting regional cooperation, have made it far more difficult to carry out long-term development efforts. The scale of humanitarian needs is enormous, and millions of people have fled their homes. There is every reason to expect that the humanitarian needs will continue to rise in the time ahead, while the humanitarian space and access continue to be restricted. The security situation in the Sahel countries is challenging, making it difficult for personnel on the ground to carry out their work. Women, children and vulnerable groups are disproportionately hard hit by crises and the impacts of climate change. The sharp population growth in the region, and the rapidly expanding young population, may create opportunities for development, but may also give rise to significant demographic challenges. Inadequate access to and poor quality education pose obstacles to democratic stability and economic growth. Norway remains committed to carrying out targeted efforts to improve living conditions for the civilian population in the region.

Norway will continue its efforts to enhance protection of civilians against violence and abuse and promote respect for international humanitarian law in situations of armed conflict. In addition, it is crucial to strengthen the resilience of local communities to crises, including in areas where the central authorities are not present or are very weak. The strategy employs an integrated approach designed to ensure effective coordination between humanitarian action and efforts to promote peace, security and long-term development. An integrated approach is essential to reduce needs over time, tackle the causes of forced displacement and find lasting solutions for refugees and internally displaced people. It is also vital to enhance the capacity of local communities in the Sahel region to address both the needs of their own populations and those of migrants and the internally displaced.

Norway also attaches importance to promoting climate change adaptation, combating hunger, and working to avert future hunger crises. Paradoxically, African countries import food for about USD 110 billion every year. Trade deficits and rising debt levels lead to poverty. Developing countries need to build their own food systems and design and implement their own policies in order to feed their populations. The impacts of climate change on farmers and fishers are far-reaching. Action is therefore needed to adapt agriculture to climate change, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions where possible. Promoting climate-smart agriculture and improving soil health will involve cultivating crops that are resilient to climate change and using cultivation techniques that maintain soil health. It is particularly important to strengthen local resilience in areas where the central and local authorities have little or no presence.

Norwegian financial support, both humanitarian aid and long-term development assistance, is primarily provided through the UN, civil society organisations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and other multilateral channels. Norway is a major donor of non-earmarked funding to the UN and the international financial institutions, and a considerable proportion of this funding is allocated to efforts in the Sahel countries. Given the enormous funding needs, it is crucial to work with partners that have the ability to mobilise development finance and that can provide instruments that can reduce risk and attract private sector engagement and partnerships.

Norway will give particular priority to:

International humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles: Based on *Norway's Humanitarian Strategy*, Norway will continue its humanitarian efforts to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity in line with international humanitarian law and the humanitarian principles.

Humanitarian diplomacy: Via its missions in other countries and its missions to multilateral organisations, Norway will step up its efforts relating to: protection of civilians, compliance with international humanitarian law, humanitarian access and humanitarian exemptions in sanctions regimes. Administrative constraints imposed by central authorities in the region create unpredictability and challenges, and these issues should be addressed through dialogue.

Protection of migrants and refugees, and efforts to counter irregular migration: Norway will cooperate with relevant multilateral institutions on countering irregular migration, protecting vulnerable migrants and strengthening communities hosting migrants and displaced people. We will work to enhance the capacity of local communities in the Sahel region to address the needs both of their own populations and of migrants and the internally displaced. We will also continue to work to protect refugees and internally displaced people and ensure compliance with the Refugee Convention and other relevant instruments. Partnerships with the EU to address issues such as migrant smuggling and human trafficking, international protection for migrants and refugees, and asylum and legal migration will be continued. Safe, orderly and regular migration could offer significant economic benefits to both the country of origin and the recipient country.

Mine clearance and small arms: Norway will support humanitarian mine clearance activities, work to counter the proliferation of small arms and ammunition and promote compliance with international norms against the use of conventional weapons that have particularly harmful effects on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Food security and inclusive sustainable development: Norway will maintain its longstanding engagement in supporting efforts to strengthen local food production and climate change adaptation. We will seek to reduce vulnerability by promoting sustainable, climate-resilient food production. This will include efforts to diversify crops, prevent crop yield losses, and to enhance access to input factors such as seed, fertiliser and animal feed. Norway will work to build resilience to crises and the impacts of climate change, using early warning

mechanisms and social security systems as effective tools for both enhancing climate adaptation and increasing food security. In acute hunger crises, humanitarian aid will be key. Norway will also promote renewable energy and support local business development and the development of infrastructure.

Education: Norway will continue its longstanding engagement in promoting education. Given the region's young population, educational programmes tailored to the local context will be of fundamental importance in building resilient local communities and advancing gender equality, as well as vital in terms of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Norway will work to further develop education systems that can provide high-quality basic education, and will seek to ensure that education efforts are incorporated into humanitarian action. Norway will continue its dialogue with the countries in the region on issues such as the Safe Schools Declaration and education in crisis situations. We will promote vocational training with a view to improving the employment prospects of young people in the region.

Women's rights and gender equality: Norway will work to ensure that girls are given the opportunity to complete their education. This will also help to combat poverty, prevent child marriage and promote sustainable economic growth. Norway will defend women's rights and support strategies and plans aimed at accelerating the demographic transition. Norway will take an integrated approach to preventing, combating and responding to sexual and gender-based violence including harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. We will work to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, including in the context of humanitarian response. We will increase support to local women-led organisations in order to enhance their efforts, and provide training for partners operating in conflict zones. Norway will also work to strengthen women's economic rights and opportunities to participate in the labour market, including women's access to financial resources and services.

Civil society and multilateral organisations: Norway will primarily provide funding through civil society organisations and multilateral channels, including in the form of core support and via multi-donor trust funds. We will work to ensure that multilateral funds and programmes address the needs of the Sahel countries and promote an integrated approach and greater use of joint analysis. We will also assess the possibility of developing a more active partnership with the African Development Bank in order to promote business development in the region, drawing on the Bank's in-depth knowledge of and networks in the Sahel countries and coastal states.

Contact with the authorities: Norway will seek to respond to local needs. Appropriate dialogue for example with central, local and technical government agencies will be necessary in this context.

2. Peacebuilding and stabilisation:

Work to prevent and combat violent extremism, and promote peacebuilding, stabilisation and the participation of women in efforts relating to peace and security.

Over the past year, the framework for peacebuilding and stabilisation efforts in the Sahel has changed dramatically as a result of further coups d'état, the dissolution of the G5 Sahel, the closure of MINUSMA, the collapse of the Algiers Accord, the establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États du Sahel – AES) by Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali and the announced withdrawal of these three countries from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). At the same time, certain regional initiatives give cause for hope, such as the 2017 Accra Initiative and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) established in 1994 to improve security and promote stabilisation in the Lake Chad region, which continues to play an important role.

There is uncertainty about the future role of ECOWAS, and the African Union (AU) has yet to define the nature of its further engagement in the region. The Sahel has become an arena for rivalry between major powers. Russia is increasingly playing a destabilising role, not least through its strengthened military engagement. China employs a wide range of actors and instruments to advance its interests, and these interests are not aligned with those of Norway in all areas. Other states are also seeking to increase their influence in the region.

Climate change and resource scarcity are exacerbating existing conflicts in the region. The lack of future prospects for the region's rapidly growing young population is a key driver of violent extremism.

It is vital to ensure the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, in peace processes and in efforts to prevent and combat violent extremism. There is also a need to work with boys and men to reduce violence levels and promote gender equality.

Given the changing framework, and the significant deterioration in the political and security situation in the Sahel, it is essential that Norway's peacebuilding and stabilisation efforts in the years ahead are flexible and adapted to ongoing developments.

Norway will give particular priority to:

UN conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts: Norway will continue to support UN peace diplomacy efforts and will work to secure resources for UN activities at both country and regional level. We will also seek to ensure that the UN Peacebuilding Commission maintains its engagement in addressing the situation in the Sahel, at the regional level and vis-à-vis individual countries, and that the UN Peacebuilding Fund continues to allocate funding to the Sahel.

Coordination: Norway will maintain its partnerships with various international civil society organisations that are engaged in promoting dialogue, peace mediation and peacebuilding, and will work to facilitate the best possible coordination between the various actors working in this field and to ensure that these efforts have broad support in the affected countries and regional organisations.

Women, peace and security: Norway will highlight the relevance of the women, peace and security agenda, in line with Norway's national action plan. Priority will be given to ensuring the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, in peace processes and in efforts to prevent and combat violent extremism. We will strengthen our cooperation with the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security.

Regional organisations: Norway will work to strengthen AU and UN regional efforts in the areas of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Norway will also support processes aimed at establishing well-functioning regional cooperation mechanisms. This will include working to enhance the ability of ECOWAS to fulfil its mandate. We will encourage constructive cooperation between the UN, the AU and the subregional organisations on promoting peaceful development in the Sahel. We are also seeking to support African-led peace operations, with a focus on promoting compliance with human rights and IHL norms in the implementation of operations.

Border areas: Norway will consider providing support for measures to enhance security and reduce vulnerability in border areas, which are the areas most severely affected by violent extremism.

Combating violent extremism: Norway will support local and regional initiatives to strengthen capacity to combat violent extremism, such as the International Academy for the Fight Against Terrorism (AICT) in the Côte d'Ivoire. We will also consider providing support to the Accra Initiative. We will maintain our engagement in the global anti-ISIL coalition and will consider participating in relevant capacity-building activities such as Flintlock. At the same time, it is important to support efforts to prevent violent extremism and facilitate the reintegration of former members of violent extremist groups. We will promote the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We will continue our cooperation with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), which is an important partner in the effort to build resilient local communities. We will also continue to work to prevent the financing of terrorism, which will include promoting compliance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards on combating money laundering.

Stabilisation: Norway will work to enhance the resilience of local communities through various stabilisation mechanisms such as the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad region, as well as to prevent recruitment to violent extremist groups. Norway will strengthen coordination between stabilisation efforts and humanitarian action and promote compliance with the humanitarian principles. We will consider participation in stabilisation programmes in the region on an ongoing basis. Norway will maintain its cooperation with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC).

Maritime security: Given Norway's significant shipping interests, it will be essential to consider the issue of maritime security in relation to developments in the broader Sahel region and with reference to relevant multilateral instruments such as the UN Security Council resolution (2634) on combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security and Safety.

3. Democracy and gender equality:

Promote good governance, domestic resource mobilisation, democratic development, human rights and gender equality.

Democracy and good governance in the region have come under severe pressure in recent years, with coups d'état in three of the Sahel countries, a controversial transition process in a fourth, and considerable ongoing uncertainty about stability in the region. Freedom of expression and the civic space are increasingly restricted. The Sahel countries have acceded to key international human rights instruments, and it is important to hold them accountable for fulfilling their obligations.

Cooperation with non-democratic authorities can be challenging, but the objective must be to consolidate and/or put in place credible, time-limited transition processes aimed at ensuring a rapid return to a democratic constitutional order. At the same time, we must work to ensure that national and local authorities are able to deliver basic services to the civilian population and enjoy the necessary legitimacy among the people. It is also important to monitor compliance with democratic norms, including in the coastal states.

Norway will give particular priority to:

Transition to democratic governance: Norway will work to encourage military, non-democratically elected regimes to agree on a binding schedule for the transition to civilian democratic rule. This will require dialogue with the authorities in the relevant countries. It will also be necessary to maintain contact with ECOWAS and influential countries in the region. This balancing act will be important to avoid legitimising unconstitutional seizures of power.

Human rights: Norway will work through relevant channels, such as the UN, to hold the Sahel countries accountable for fulfilling their human rights obligations.

Countering disinformation: Norway will combat attempts by external forces to undermine fundamental democratic norms and human rights. We will consider providing support for measures to counter disinformation.

Rule of law: Norway will support relevant projects carried out under the auspices of the UN, AU, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and other actors that seek to promote the rule of law and good governance, including combating organised crime and corruption. These efforts should be targeted at both central and local authorities. We will work to ensure that relevant countries comply with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Standard, which promotes the open and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources.

Domestic resource mobilisation and management: Norway will strengthen cooperation on increasing domestic financing for development through taxation systems and the sound management of public funds.

Civil society: Norway will support the development of an independent civil society that promotes democratic progress and the delivery of basic services in the

broader Sahel region, while also working to ensure that the perspectives of civil society on these issues are listened to and civic space is protected.

Women's rights and gender equality: Norway will continue to be a clear and constructive advocate of gender equality and the need to safeguard the rights of all girls and women, in line with Norway's *Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy (2023–2030)*.

Education: Norway will continue to support education initiatives as a basis for promoting democratic development and gender equality.

Implementation of the strategy: dilemmas and risks

The security situation, the lack of cooperation arenas and anti-Western rhetoric give rise to a number of dilemmas that will affect our efforts in the time ahead.

The following factors in particular will pose dilemmas for us moving forward:

- **Non-democratic authorities.** It is not feasible for Norway to engage in direct development cooperation with non-democratic authorities. It will therefore be natural to target support directly towards the civilian population and to make use of channels such as civil society organisations, the UN and multilateral funds and institutions, as well as the AU and regional organisations. Norwegian support to local civil society organisations is important given that the civic space is steadily shrinking. It is therefore also important to encourage local civil society organisations to come together to form networks and coalitions. At the same time, there will be a need to maintain contact with various parts of the government administrations, in particular at the technical and local level, for example to carry out our humanitarian diplomacy activities and thematic cooperation relating to food security and education, including the Safe Schools Declaration. It will also be necessary to pursue contact with the central authorities for example in connection with promoting dialogue on regional cooperation and transition processes towards democratic governance.
- **Anti-Western rhetoric:** Anti-Western rhetoric, where the question of sovereignty is a key issue, is widespread in the Sahel countries, particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. This negative rhetoric is consistently directed at Western countries and the UN system. In addition, these countries are strengthening ties with authoritarian states, such as Russia, China and Iran. The Sahel region has become an arena for geopolitical rivalry. These factors make dialogue with the authorities on governance and democratic development more difficult, and in some cases such dialogue is best carried out in close cooperation with the UN, multilateral and regional organisations or other partners. Anti-Western rhetoric and opposition to the SRHR and LGBTIQ+ agendas can be expected to increase.
- **Lack of regional cooperation organisations.** The withdrawal of three of the Sahel countries from ECOWAS and the dissolution of the G5 Sahel means that no well-functioning structure for regional cooperation exists, and there are now fewer arenas for dialogue. There is particular uncertainty about how ECOWAS will develop in terms of both number of members and main areas of activity. As a result of this situation, the UN organisations, the World Bank and the African Development Bank will have a more prominent role. At the same time, it will be important to continue to pursue dialogue via selected civil society organisations and individuals. It will also be crucial to take steps to better equip institutions such as the AU and ECOWAS to deliver on their mandates.
- **Challenging security situation.** The security situation in the Sahel countries is volatile and there is uncertainty about the extent to which UN organisations and civil society organisations will be able to implement development projects, humanitarian efforts and peacebuilding projects. The challenging security

situation also has implications for the security of personnel on the ground. In addition, it will be difficult to carry out independent evaluations of projects. This means that there will be a need for adaptability and flexibility. Evaluations of Norwegian efforts in the Sahel have recommended greater boldness in the choice of partners. This must be weighed against the potential risks and our limited presence in the region. As long as our established partners deliver good results, which the most recent evaluation confirmed, the threshold for entering into new or innovative partnerships will be relatively high.

- **Changed location of Embassy.** Moving the embassy that covers the Sahel region from Bamako to Dakar will enable us to strengthen the regional perspective, as Dakar serves as a hub for many key multilateral organisations and civil society organisations. However, more frequent visits to the countries that were previously members of the G5 Sahel will be required.

4 Coordination and partnerships

Previous evaluations of Norwegian efforts in the Sahel have identified a need to strengthen internal and external coordination. Steps will be taken to enhance coordination of Norway's efforts to implement the strategy, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with Norad and relevant ministries. Contact with Norwegian civil society organisations will be strengthened through more frequent use of established mechanisms for information exchange and coordination. The Norwegian civil society organisations are a particularly important channel for support given their close and effective cooperation with local partners that have in-depth insight into and understanding of developments in the region.

The UN is a key actor, in terms of both its normative and its operational role. Cooperation with the UN system will therefore be vital for following up activities in all three priority focus areas in the revised strategy. Moreover, the UN is an important arena for discussions on Sahel-related issues, for example in the Security Council or the Human Rights Council. Norway plays an active role in the UN Peacebuilding Commission and is a key supporter of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Norway has long been at the forefront internationally in implementing UN Security Council resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security, and worked actively to highlight the importance of the women, peace and security agenda in the context of the UN MINUSMA mission.

The UN system is an important partner in the implementation of specific projects and programmes aimed at assisting the countries in the region in building resilient local communities and in the longer term achieving their sustainable development goals. Cooperation with the World Bank and the African Development Bank is of crucial importance for realising the long-term objectives of the Sahel strategy. Norway will seek to act as a catalyst for mobilising finance by promoting initiatives that can unlock long-term funding from a broader range of sources.

Norway will continue to participate actively in international coordination arenas, such as the Sahel Coalition (political) and the Sahel Alliance (development). The Sahel Alliance focuses on the development dimension and includes key relevant international actors engaged in the Sahel such as the UN family, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. The priorities of the Sahel Alliance are closely aligned with Norway's priorities, and encompass issues such as food security, job creation, climate action, strengthening of local communities and delivery of basic services. Norway will work to strengthen coordination between the Sahel Alliance and the Sahel Coalition.

Norway participates in the group of Western countries' Special Representatives for the Sahel, which is chaired by the EU. Cooperation with the EU is of vital importance given the institution's deep engagement in the broader region. Contact with the EU is also crucial in light of the impact developments in the Sahel have on the European continent in terms of migration and refugee movements and the ongoing security

threats posed to Europe by terrorist groups in the Sahel region. Trade in critical raw minerals with the countries in the Sahel is also vital to enabling Europe to achieve its green transition objectives. Coordination with the other Nordic countries is also important, particularly within the framework of the World Bank and the African Development Bank where we belong to the same constituency. Norway has established effective cooperation with the US and the UK on issues relating to the Sahel and West Africa, and this will be continued. In addition, it will be of great importance to maintain constructive dialogue with coastal states such as Nigeria and Ghana and with countries in North Africa to support measures to promote maritime security.

Funding provided by Norway has been used to strengthen the efforts of the AU in the Sahel, and Norway will work to further enhance the organisation's capacity to implement its overall strategies in the region. Norway will maintain its contact with ECOWAS. Norway will support efforts by the countries in the region to put in place a regional cooperation architecture that supports and complements ECOWAS. It is important that the countries in the region are in the driving seat and have ownership of any such processes.

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