



**Statement at the first Ministerial meeting of the
Coalition for the Sahel held by videoconference,
12 June 2020**

**Mr. Urmas Reinsalu,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia**

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your insights and comprehensive overviews in today's meeting. This gathering is timely and essential.

I would like to thank France for their persistent and hard work in pushing this agenda forward.

We share one goal and that is to bring sustainable stability to the Sahel.

The security situation in the Sahel is worsening and the rising instability is disrupting people's daily lives and economic activity.

Fear is spreading like fire across the region, induced by continuous attacks that are targeting innocent civilians and the forces protecting them. We must join our efforts to end that vicious cycle.

We cannot afford to waste time on fragmented and narrow approaches. We must target all the root causes of violence.

Estonia has understood the gravity of the situation and announced its commitment to the first pillar of the International Coalition for the Sahel.

We have substantially increased our contribution to the fight against terrorism within the Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba.

Counter-terrorism response must go hand-in-hand with other confidence-building measures. Thereby, we are also a contributing ally in MINUSMA and the EU Training Mission in Mali.

Estonia is currently updating its Action Plan for Participation in International Civilian Missions.

Our preeminent focus in Africa is on the Sahel region. We are already participating in EUCAP Sahel Mali and are actively seeking experts for EUCAP Sahel Niger.

We are considering options to contribute to other pillars of the coalition through the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel.

Today's gathering is a good place to commend national, regional, and international partners for their joint efforts in addressing the crosscutting issues in the region.

I am convinced that only through an integrated and holistic approach can we succeed in alleviating the threats in the Sahel.

Thank you!