



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

**Mrs. Ine Eriksen Søreide,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway**

Excellencies,

I would like to thank the EU, Mauritania and France for inviting us to this timely meeting of the International Coalition for the Sahel. Allow me also to present my condolences to the people of Côte d'Ivoire for the loss of 10 of their soldiers in the terrible terror attack close to the border of Burkina Faso yesterday.

We all need to join forces to promote peace, stability and socio-economic development in the Sahel region.

Norway remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation and the lack of protection, which are affecting millions of civilians. The situation is further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objectives of the Coalition are very much in line with Norway's strategy for the Sahel. Peace and security are essential for sustainable development. In efforts to restore state functions to affected areas, priority should be given to good governance and respect for human rights.

It is also vital to focus on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and efforts to promote dialogue. Women have a key role to play. That is why Norway is seeking, with a mandate from the signatory parties in Mali, to ensure the inclusion of women in the implementation of the Algiers Agreement.

Norway is a strong supporter of the multilateral system. That is why Norway has taken the initiative to establish a global UN fund to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. So far, 47 countries have received support from the fund, one of them being Mauritania.

Our development assistance to the Sahel- 100 million euros in 2019 - is also mainly channelled through multilateral partners. I am also glad to announce that Norway intends to join the Sahel Alliance as a full member.

Norway is a strong supporter of MINUSMA. We are currently considering a new deployment of a Hercules transport aircraft to the mission. This is part of the rotational scheme for military air transport, which was initiated by the Nordic countries in 2016. We will also maintain our support for the training of the Malian police and security forces through MINUSMA.

We will continue to support human rights training for the G5 Sahel forces, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

In order to achieve results, we need a coordinated effort involving all international stakeholders, with national governments in the driving seat.

Norway will continue to be a consistent partner to the countries in the Sahel. We look forward to working with our partners in the Sahel Coalition.