



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

**Mr. Martin Povejšil,
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic**

The Czech Republic supports efforts contributing to peace, security and prosperity, having European neighbourhood at its centre. Given the past and current developments, the Sahel region plays an important role.

I have the honor to announce that, this morning, the Czech Brigadier General, Mr. František Ridzák, took over the command of the EUTM Mali for the next six months. Taking over the EUTM command is part of a bigger role that we are willing to assume in the Sahel region.

The planned Czech involvement in the Task Force Takuba will bring our engagement in the Sahel to an even higher level.

Terrorism remains one of the most severe threats we are currently facing. While there has been some success in countering Daesh, we have not won yet. We are facing the evolution of Daesh into a covert decentralized network, which is still capable of getting financial support and recruiting new fighters.

The Czech Republic is an active member in the Global Coalition against Daesh since the very beginning. We are also members of the Small Group, which allows us to underline our contribution to the fight against Daesh both in the Middle East and in the Sahel region. We support discussion in the Global Coalition aiming at defining value-added contribution to the fight against Daesh in Sahel.

Our key goal is to empower our local partners. We want to help them, so they can help themselves. Therefore, our activities in the Sahel region are not limited only to security area.

Humanitarian assistance provided in particular in Mali and Niger has been one of the main pillars of the Czech activities in G5 Sahel under the national Strategy for Sahel 2018 – 2021.

We have in particular focused on nutrition and livelihood for refugees, returnees and hosting communities. Currently, we also contribute to the COVID-19 response.

From our experience as well as from our discussions with our implementing partners, we find the real on-the ground cooperation and coherence between humanitarian, peace and development actors and activities as essential.

Therefore, CZ welcomes the establishment of the Coalition for the Sahel to coordinate all international initiatives. The CZ as a member state of the European Union is committed to close cooperation with the Sahel countries and international partners to help create a stable, well-functioning and prosperous region.