

Forum: Security Council
Issue: The Situation in the Sahel Region
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I. Introduction

In the Sahel Region, farmers often no longer have the means to support people in their state. Their crops are failing. They no longer have the money to support their own families and to avoid starvation. Consequently, they migrate to cities, to areas where job opportunities and means to stay alive are promised.

However, what happens when all the farmers in a state do this and cities face mass migration from the rural areas? This leads to increasing amounts of conflict as a result of differing beliefs and ideologies, as well as competition over strained resources, such as food and living space. This conflict in turn sparks radicalism and terrorism.

Therefore, there is a connection linking massive droughts, food shortages, and famine, all of which have contributed to great economic and political instability.

This raises the question: how can the issue be addressed when it is caused by external factors that are beyond the control of the people of the Sahel region? The people in the affected areas do not contribute to climate change, but they are the most vulnerable to the effects of a warming climate.

The delegates of the Security Council will have to consider a multitude of factors when creating tangible solutions to this issue. Firstly, on a larger level, climate change and its impacts are something that must be addressed by the entire political arena and is not an issue that can be solved by a singular state. Secondly, the states impacted by this crisis must somehow find a way to be able to provide resources to their citizens without the continuous help of NGOs to find a long-term solution for the problems within this region. Lastly, a short-term solution must also be provided to deal with the immediate threat that terrorism and political instability pose.

II. Definition of Key Terms

a) Climate Change

Climate change refers to a statistically significant variation in either the mean state of the climate, or in the variability thereof. Officially, Article 1 of the the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) defines climate change as: "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods." Although climate change was historically caused by either natural causes or human activities, in the last century, it has been provoked primarily by the latter. Since the industrial revolution, the release and absorption of carbon dioxide has been highly influenced by human activities including the burning of fossil fuels, and the act deforestation. In 2017, the top carbon

dioxide emitters were China (27.21%), the United States (14.58%), the European Union (8.79%), and India (6.82%).

b) Sahel Region

The Sahel Region extends has an area of around 2.5 million km² stretching over 5,500 km from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea between the 14° to 18° of latitude N to the west and the 12° to 16° latitude N to the east. The Sahelian belt therefore crosses the African continent almost parallel to the equator. It is the ecoclimatic and biogeographic zone of transition in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian Savanna to the south. The region includes parts of Senegal, southern Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, the extreme south of Algeria, Niger, the north of Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, the extreme north of South Sudan, Eritrea and the extreme north of Ethiopia. The Sahel region is a region which often suffers highly erratic rainfall, between 100mm and 600mm of rain yearly. The extreme precipitation variability is the major problem causing droughts but also flooding. The region has been tainted by violence, instability and extremism due to terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).



Picture credit: AFP

c) Military Coup

A military coup, often referred to as a “coup d’État”, is a surprising, and usually violent overthrow of the government by members of the military or paramilitary organizations with the aim of taking control of the state. Since 2010, there have been over 30 coups or attempted coups on the African continent alone. Military juntas usually justify their coups by bringing political stability for the nation and ridding a country of its corrupt and ineffective civil-politicians. Since military governments can be very unstable and chaotic, they create an environment in which it is almost impossible to draft any national policy, and counteracting climate change is most often not their first priority. Also, since it is the least accountable branch of the government that rules the country, military juntas are also extremely undemocratic. Furthermore, it is often the case that military juntas are not internationally recognized right away so cooperation among countries becomes difficult.

d) The Group of Five Sahel States (G5 Sahel)

The Group of Five Sahel States (G5 Sahel) is a regional intergovernmental organization in West Africa, comprised of Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Niger. It works to cooperate on policies regarding development and security. Mainly, however, the organization was formed to strengthen the bond of the five nations to battle the threat of jihadist organizations such as AQIM, Boko Haram and Al-Mourabitoun together.

e) Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

An internally displaced person is someone who is forced to flee their home but remains in his or her country. In 2015, there were an estimated 37,494 million IDPs in the world. Unlike the numerous treaties that apply to refugees, there is no international universal treaty which applies specifically to IDPs.

f) Climate Refugees

The term “climate refugee” is a very vague term which has a variety of different definitions. It is worth noting that there is no official definition. Neither the [United Nations](#) or any international agency that works with refugees or climate change recognises any particular definition. In general, the term “climate refugees” refers to people who are forced to leave their homes because of short-term or long-term changes in their local environment that make it impossible to lead a life there. These changes have to be changes that compromise their security or well-being.

The reason it is so difficult for an official definition to be created is that a refugee’s migration can be directly or indirectly caused by climate change. For example, climate change could affect droughts and therefore farming, potentially causing a farmer to migrate to find other work due to their lack of income from the farm. Would this migrant be considered a “climate refugee” even though they wouldn’t have had to move, had their community offered alternative employment options? Furthermore, a problem with the term “climate refugees” is that it implies that these migrants would be given refugee status even though the Refugee Convention doesn’t include the impacts of climate change as a possible reason to give someone refugee status. Therefore, even if someone was considered a climate refugee, it would not guarantee that they are given the same rights as a refugee fleeing religious persecution. Due to the lack of a formal definition, estimates vary greatly on how many climate refugees there actually are or will be in the future. In March 2018, the World Bank reported that climate change will transform more than 143 million people into “climate migrants” escaping crop failure, water scarcity, rising sea-levels, droughts etc. As climate change worsens storms and droughts, climate scientists and migration experts expect that number to rise.

g) Sharia Law

Sharia Law is a religious law which provides believers of the Muslim faith with guidance on how to live an ethical life. It lays down guidelines on how to pray and how

to treat one's family members, neighbors and those who are in need. It is derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah (prophetic tradition) and interpreted by qualified scholars. Sharia provides guidance on a very wide range of topics including ritual purity, inheritance, diet, clothing, modesty, marriage, divorce, religious practice, charitable giving, investments, business contracts, criminal law, etc. Opponents of Sharia law argue that when strict interpretations of holy scriptures become the primary foundation of jurisprudence, the lack of secularism within the state paves the way towards totalitarianism.

h) Nomadic Herders

“Nomadic herding” is a form of pastoralism when livestock are herded in order to find fresh pastures on which to graze. Strictly speaking, true nomads follow an irregular pattern of movement, in contrast with transhumance where seasonal pastures are fixed. However this distinction is often not observed and the term nomad used for both. Of the 30-40 million nomadic herders that live in the world, the majority are found in Central Asia and the Sahel Region.

III. General Overview

a) Nomad and Farmer Conflict

The loss of fertile land for the use of grazing has led to heated conflict between the nomad herders, such as those in the Sahara Desert, and the farmers within the region. Up until recently, the two had complemented each other because “in the rainy season from May to September, farmers in the southern Sahel till their fields, and

herders spend this time in pastures to the north, where low rainfall makes the land unsuitable for agriculture.”¹

They are competing for the same land while each group claims they have a legitimate claim to it. It has been claimed that “these clashes are becoming as potentially dangerous as the Boko Haram insurgency in the north east”. As of 2016, there have been 2,500 fatalities as a result of the conflicts between the groups. Due to the fact that the amount of available land is decreasing, the two groups are constantly being forced together since “sedentary farmers are [...] continuously enlarging their fields and turning pastures and corridors into cultivated lands.”² This has made the passing of nomadic herders through a region impossible without sparking a conflict between those who had previously already been there. This conflict is a result of the fact that farmers are barely producing the necessary amount of products needed to survive and the nomadic herders destroying what little crops they have makes the situation much more dire. It has been said that the sedentary farmers are purposely formatting their fields so that any passing of nomad groups must cause damage so that they can then extort these groups so as to gain “excessive compensations and penalties from herders.”

The reaction of local governments has been poor due to the fact that “Political elites, as well as international development agencies and researchers, consider migratory herding a backward, inefficient and environmentally damaging system of production.” As a result of this, the treatment of these groups has been incredibly poor and stigmatized.

¹ “Conflicts between Crop Farmers and Migratory Herders Contribute to Destabilisation in Sahel Region.” *D+C*, www.dandc.eu/en/article/conflicts-between-crop-farmers-and-migratory-herders-contribute-destabilisation-sahel-region.

² “Conflicts between Crop Farmers and Migratory Herders Contribute to Destabilisation in Sahel Region.” *D+C*, www.dandc.eu/en/article/conflicts-between-crop-farmers-and-migratory-herders-contribute-destabilisation-sahel-region.

An example of this would be the Tuareg people whose population span Libya, Algeria, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Following Mali gaining independence, there were several Tuareg rebellions which has resulted in poor relations with the government. According to “Asfura-Heim, the Tuareg "have had poor relationships with state governments [and] they claim that they have been systematically marginalized, both politically and economically" (May 2013, 2)”³

b) Climate Change in Africa

Climate change is a contemporary issue and its impacts are felt around the globe, especially in Africa. Climate change has had catastrophic effects on the weather patterns, seeing as extreme weather conditions have created new difficulties for the populations. The most common results of such climate changes are flooding and droughts, each occurring in different regions of the continent. The larger of the two issues for the Sahel Region is the extreme droughts they are facing which are said to be the worst that had been experienced in the last 60 years. The drought, in East Africa specifically, began in 2011 and has not eased since then. This has had devastating effects on the water and food supply seeing as both necessities are scarce in such conditions. For example, Mali is entirely dependent on the Niger River for both food and water, however, this river is on the brink of “environmental devastation” as a result of pollution. Another country in the Sahel Region facing similar difficulties is Nigeria, where half the population lives without access to water.

Vital lakes and rivers are drying and becoming polluted are one of the most dire consequences of climate change. These water supplies are one of the singular reasons why it is possible to live in such weather conditions, however, if these were to no longer be viable, then people could no longer live in those circumstances. These bodies of water are vital for the populations due to a multitude of reasons, such as the fact that

³ United Nations. “Mali: Information on the Treatment of Members of the Tuareg Ethnic Group by Authorities and Society (2013-March 2014).” *Refworld*, www.refworld.org/docid/53720e294.html.
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the majority of this region does not have running water therefore they must regularly go to natural water sources to get water needed for everyday life. If the closest water supply is no longer available, then the people will either have to walk further distances to find water, uproot themselves and their families in search of a place to live that is in close vicinity to a water source, or will drink from this contaminated source and become very ill. Water scarcity also has many other far reaching problems, such as reduction in the ability to raise livestock because of the dependency on good quality water.

Another result of climate change that is threatening the Sahel Region is desertification. “Desertification” is “the process by which fertile land becomes desert” which is a common byproduct of droughts. The effect that this has is that land that had previously been able to supply food and sustain the region is no longer fertile and can not practice agriculture. “Nowadays the wind easily erodes the soil because there is little vegetation, so the landscape is brown and desolate for most of the year.”⁴ Desertification is only amplified by the strong winds that blow throughout the region which remove the fertile topsoil, thereby further reducing the productivity of agriculture.

The difficulty in combating climate change is that these issues must be simultaneously combated by all states, because if even one state does not comply with any form of restrictions regarding carbon dioxide emissions or the use of crude oil, the result will not be of the necessary magnitude to truly combat climate change. This lack of collective action has made the solutions, such as the Paris Climate Conference, ineffective. However, one could argue that the Paris Climate Conference was bound to be ineffective due to a lack of enforcement mechanism--meaning that states could violate the agreement without fearing any form of repercussions.

The question this then raises is why, in theory, should developing states have to abide by the same restrictions as developed countries when developed countries are

⁴ Eden Foundation. “Eden Foundation.” *Desertification - a Threat to the Sahel*, www.eden-foundation.org/project/desertif.html.

more responsible for climate change? Many developed states became such through industrial revolutions that were extremely harmful to the environment and now have the luxury of being environmentally friendly. In LEDCs, on the other hand, there is a tradeoff that must be made because some think that reducing poverty through economic advancement and being environmentally friendly are mutually exclusive.

The results of climate change have both long and short-term effects on the social and political state of the countries. The short-term impacts are that the states' economies are being strained as a result of the damages created by the weather conditions, for example, the floods destroying entire communities. However, more concerning consequences are those that are long-term in nature. These are the issues that the local governments have failed to respond adequately to or simply do not have the means to respond to such issues. It is these long-term effects that are the cause of political instability in the Sahel Region, which as an extension has had other serious implications.

c) Terrorism

Another one of the long-term consequences of the climate change that the region is facing is the amplification of terrorism and militant groups. This is partially a result of the masses of migration which has cause smaller and more frequent conflicts as a result of ideological and religious differences and a more severe lack of resources. The other reason why such groups have become more frequent and more dangerous throughout the region is because of the political unrest and instability which will be outlined later.

When there is a fragile government, some may see it as an opportunity to instate their own ideas of how to govern or see it as an opportunity to redefine the social order and replace the government. There are many such extremist groups that span the entirety of the Sahel Region, the most prominent of which are AQIM, Boko Haram and

Al-Mourabitoun. These groups have launched multiple military coups, most of which have been successful to some extent. They are jihadist groups with extremist interpretations of Islam for the establishment of a Sharia state. They refute anything they believe that has a 'Western' influence.

I. AQIM

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, also known as AQIM, is a jihadist group based in Algeria that is known to have connections to Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda. Their initial aim was to overthrow the Algerian government during the Algerian Civil war in 1998, however, since then they have branched their operations to other nearby states such as Mali. In 2012, when rebels from the Tuareg population rose against the government in Mali, AQIM officials were quick to head the rebels' charge. They began to work in cooperation with other Islamic group and gained a foothold in many towns in Mali where the instituted Sharia Law. Despite the land that had been under their control, when in an attempt to re-establish stability in Mali, a French military group had come and the AQIM and their associated groups had been pushed out of Mali. This coup is known as the 'Mali Crisis' and was a major contributor to their weakened economic and political state. As mentioned previously, such groups use a multitude of tactics to induce fear and this organization was found in many international headlines following a slew of high-profile kidnappings and their massive involvement in "regional arms and drug trafficking trade". In 2012, those in the organization who were still in Algeria and Mali were "compounded by the harsh French and Algerian military crackdowns" and therefore branched off to create a new group called 'The Those Who Sign in Blood Brigade's'.

II. Boko Haram

Possibly the most notorious militant group found in the Sahel Region is Boko Haram. When translated, it means “Western education is forbidden.” It is a jihadist militant group whose primary purpose was to instate Sharia Law throughout the region. It was founded in Nigeria in the late 1990s by Mohammed Yusuf and once again used a range of attacks as a means to instill fear so as to gain control over regions as well as promising to restore order in the region through implementing Sharia law. With its base being in Nigeria, for years it has used a host of methods to strike fear in the hearts of the citizens while undermining the government system in Nigeria. In 2011, on the day of the former Nigerian President’s, Goodluck Jonathan’s inauguration, Boko Haram detonated multiple bombs to create civil unrest. Where the group has been active, they have continuously targeted institutions that stand for the “Western” civilization they so adamantly oppose, such as the attack on the UN compound in Abuja.

The most famous of their actions was abductions and killings that have spanned the last eight years, one of which include the kidnapping of the 276 school girls who were taken from their boarding school in Nigeria. This made headlines in newspapers internationally and sparked the international hashtag #bringbackourgirls. A string of mass kidnappings has occurred as well as the continual pillagings of towns all through Nigeria. The international political community has taken a stand against the extremist group. The UN Security Council placed the Boko Haram on their sanctions list. Since 2012, the local governmental military sources, as well as external military help, have continuously tried to push the jihadist group out of the state to ensure the safety for its citizens and while some advancements have been made, Boko Haram continues to threaten the lives of many and the safety of the state.

d) Political Instability

When there are hosts of jihadist groups within a state's borders committing crimes against humanity while extreme weather conditions are causing mass displacement, citizens will be prone to question the authority of the ruling government. This in turn may cause the government to lose legitimacy, which is defined as "right and acceptance of an authority, usually a governing law or a régime". There are three pillars of legitimacy: conformity to rules, justifiability in terms of shared beliefs, and legitimation through expressed consent. The dimension of legitimacy that is being weakened is the justification through shared belief because the population believes that the government is to blame for the hardships being faced in that state which is in line with the beliefs of the jihadist groups. This is not to say that the jihadist groups are legitimate in their means, but rather that the citizens no longer believe that the government serves their best interests.

Another thing that makes the establishment and maintenance of the stability of a central government difficult is the fact that many of these nations do not have a national identity. This is because of the fact that the borders of these states were arbitrarily created during the Berlin Conference of 1885 without any consideration of religious or ethnic divisions. As a result, many of these states, such as Nigeria, have hundreds of different ethnicities within their borders. When a population does not relate and identify with each other then they will also not identify with their own government. These ethnic tensions can also be a direct cause extremism in these regions.

Due to the weakened support of the government, they are more susceptible to military coups. An example of this is the Mali crisis where the population blamed the government which made them vulnerable to the AQIM military coup in 2012. The jihadist group was "fighting] for hegemony and the control of trafficking routes in the North." In 2015, after years of conflict a peace deal was brokered between the Malian government and the jihadists groups, however, the implementation of such is difficult seeing as "signatory groups still resort to violence to settle differences". Previous to this

when the Malian government feared that they would be unable to expel the AQIM from the state they sought assistance from the UN. “The United Nations Security Council unanimously [...] passed a French resolution approving an African-led force to assist the army of Mali in combating the Islamist militants.”

Another example of political instability in the Sahel region is the instability in Chad. As a result of the hostile weather conditions, about 2 million of the population is on the border of starvation. From 2005 to 2010, Chad was divided by the civil war between the “Arab-Muslims of the north and the Sub-Saharan-Christians of the south.” Similarly, to Mali, Chad faced many difficulties regarding jihadist insurgencies. The current government is still facing a weakened state and the continued threat of insurgencies and coups.

All over the region military coups have resulted in disputes over control in a state. This results in interference from an outside state or organization to reinstate and strengthen the legitimate form of governance. However, despite best efforts the extent to which this is achieved remains disputed and the governments in the Sahel Region are still weak and vulnerable to future coups and insurgencies.

e) Displacement

One of the long-term effects of the extreme climate change in Africa, specifically in the Sahel Region, is forced migration resulting in constantly increasing number of displaced persons. The reason why people are fleeing their native states is because of two reasons: terrorism and impossible living conditions.

Due to the harsh conditions, crops are failing and livestock is not surviving. Therefore, farmers are forced to moved elsewhere in the search for a means by which to make money and survive. As a result, the people in these situations either move to the larger cities in the region or they immigrate to a different country close by where

they believe the weather conditions to be better. “In 1980, only 28 percent of Africans lived in urban areas. Today, the number of Africans living in cities is 40 percent, and is projected to grow to 50 percent by 2030.”⁵

Historically, when large sums of people are being displaced, conflict is bound to occur. Be it because of ideological differences, religious differences, or an increased strain on already scarce resources. An example of this is the Mali-Niger border conflict. As stated previously, Mali has a great dependency on the Niger River for sustainability, however, with the pollution in that river reaching levels that renders the river unusable, Malians began to leave Mali in search of better conditions. “In June 2017, there were almost 62,000 Malian refugees in Niger”⁶ and due to the fact that Niger itself is also facing large amounts of scarcity in resources resentment began to manifest itself.” Niger has more refugees than all of Europe. However, this conflict is made exponentially worse due to terrorism and the presence of militant groups, which will be discussed in the terrorism sub-section.

The largest difficulty governments are now facing as a result of the masses of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees is the strain not only on resources but also on the government’s fiscal means. With an increase of population, there comes an increase in the necessary of resources such as food and water. According to the World Food Program (WFP), 20% of the Niger population “cannot meet their food needs because of factors such as inadequate agricultural production, security constraints and high demographic growth.” The region is incapable of supporting such the high number of people who are in need, which, in addition to other political issues, is causing the government to be vulnerable to coups and uprisings.

⁵ “African Urbanization - Population Connection.” *PopConnect*, www.populationconnection.org/article/african-urbanization/.

⁶ “Sahel Refugees: The Human Face of a Regional Crisis - Niger.” *ReliefWeb*, 12 Oct. 2017, reliefweb.int/report/niger/sahel-refugees-human-face-regional-crisis.

Another difficulty that governments are facing as a result of the masses of displaced persons and refugees is the medical needs of the aforementioned. According to the World Health Organization “over one million children that are at risk of severe acute malnutrition (SAM), at least 205,000 are expected to require medical care in health facilities.”⁷ This rise in migration makes the spread of disease very dangerous because of the large area that it could cover. In the Sahel Region, the mortality rate amongst children under the age of five is staggeringly high due to “three main preventable and treatable causes; pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria”, according to the WHO.

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

a) Mali

The northwestern country of Mali has been in a state of conflict since 2012 with Islamic insurgent groups. With an increase in attacks in the last two years, the state is losing more control to radical organizations linked with Al-Qaeda and is unable to provide adequate medical, humanitarian, and infrastructural aid to areas affected by war, natural disasters, and global warming. As desertification swallows up more of the arable land in northern Mali, mass migration to the southern part of the country and into the Sahel Region is rising each year. As these climate and conflict refugees seek safety in the south, they are often left with nothing, and without a governmental support systems, hunger, water shortages, and homelessness sweep the nation. On top of this, recent droughts have hit Mali harder than ever, due to the rising temperatures in the region. According to the [United States Geological survey](#) (USGS), Mali’s average temperatures are risings by .2°C every decade. While this may not seem like a lot, this rise is detrimental for crops and wildlife in the region by causing more frequent, longer, and more severe droughts and causing floods during the rain season by increasing the

⁷ “Sahel Food and Health Crisis: Emergency Health Strategy.” *World Health Organisation* , June 2012, www.who.int/hac/sahel_health_strategy_21june2012rev.pdf.

temperature differences between summer and fall. The Sahel is currently experiencing a longer heat season, something expected to increase in the future, deeming much of it unfarmable and often uninhabitable due to a lack of fresh water. The UN is providing humanitarian aid across the country while NGOs try to re-establish farms on abandoned land and are building wells to supply communities with fresh water. The EU and UN both have troops in Mali assisting with peacekeeping and the training of Malian forces. These missions have managed to achieve some peace in the country, Mali is considered the 19th most dangerous country, preceded by Colombia and succeeded by Venezuela, according to the [Global Peace Index](#).

i) UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mali

On April 25th 2013 the UNSC established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) through [Resolution 2100](#) to secure peace, stabilization, and protection of civilians. Currently 15,450 people serve on the mission with 11,632 active soldiers. The mission is meant to help rebuild the government and help the process during times of transition. While the mission doesn't directly work with the Malian government, they do secure peace in regions in the country, allowing the government to focus elsewhere.

ii) EU Training Mission in Mali

Since 2013 the European Union has had a training mission in Mali which has recently been extended until 2020 with a budget of 59.7€ million. The objective of the mission is to train Malian forces in counter terrorism and combating insurgency groups. Unlike a UN peacekeeping mission, the EU mission is not meant as a security force but as an instruction mission. Along with the 20 EU states, Albania, Georgia, Montenegro, Serbia, and the UK are

part of the mission. This mission has drastically improved Malian reactions and preparedness to insurgent groups by preparing and equipping the military.

b) Chad

Chad is a country located in north central Africa plagued by famine, disease, and drought. Insurgencies into the Sahel region of Chad have led to a refugee crisis within its borders, in turn destabilizing the situation even more and making food and water rarer and rarer resources. While humanitarian aid is being delivered and the Chadian government has tried to mitigate the effects of the migrant crisis, the drying of Lake Chad and the ongoing crises in neighboring countries is sending more people into the country, something Chad's fragile economic and humanitarian systems cannot handle. With climate change comes heat and drought, something which is severely impacting Chad. Between 2000 and 2009, Chad's average rainfall was 13% lower than that of 1920–1969. This along with the crisis regarding the drying up of Lake Chad, an area of incredible importance to Western Chad and Eastern Nigeria for agriculture and water supply, has led to incredibly long and severe droughts in Chad and the people and agriculture in the southern part of the country have been left without a reliable water supply. As the Sahara Desert and a rise of the average temperature change the south of the country, more and more people move to the Sahel and the southern part of the nation, leaving the north mostly uninhabited and the south more densely populated than ever. This desertification is claiming more agricultural usable land every year and destroying even more fertile soil. Lake Chad alone, one of the most important water reservoirs, has shrunk from 5,000 square kilometres in the early 1960s to just 3,000 square kilometres today. While the government has made attempts to mitigate problems such as famine, hunger, and water shortages in the past, these have been largely unsuccessful due to the perpetual state of conflict the country has been in since 2002. The Republic of Chad has been engaged in civil war or other armed conflict for about 36 years since it gained independence from France 57 years ago. This leads to a

diversion of resources and a lack of attention to its peoples needs, and thus makes the humanitarian crisis in Chad reliant on outside help in order to be quelled.

c) Burkina Faso

Similarly to other Sahel countries, Burkina Faso is suffering under climate change and the resulting disasters including drought, hunger, and famine. While the eastern and southwestern parts of the country traditionally receive more rainfall and lower temperatures, these regions have recently been hit by extreme droughts and harvest loss, leaving many without food and water. The country's government is currently building wells in rural areas in order to quell the water deficit and allow farmers a year round water supply for crops. As desertification makes itself present in north eastern Burkina Faso, the number of climate refugees is increasing. On top of this, the country is housing approximately 23,000 Malian refugees already. Together with poverty, famine, armed struggle, and water shortages, refugees are yet another problem the government cannot handle. As global warming continues, the refugee crisis will only increase, with refugees from neighboring countries and internally displaced people making resources scarcer than ever. While the government tries to help, without outside help, the crisis in Burkina Faso cannot be mitigated and the country will not be able to establish a strong economy to provide for its population. It will remain in a state of emergency.

These three countries are of course not the only ones severely affected. Most countries in the Sahel deal with internal conflict and refugee crises, while all deal with climate change and the effects of global warming. These three are some of the most extreme however. Burkina Faso has one of the biggest refugee crises; Mali is one of the most unstable countries in the Sahel region; and Chad is the country most affected by climate change in the world.

d) France

France has been heavily involved in the Sahel region since 2014 when they launched Operation Barkhane. Op. Barkhane is a French military mission in the G5 Sahel countries. It was established in 2014 with the objective "to become the French pillar of counterterrorism in the Sahel region" according to French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. The mission encompasses anti-terrorism training and operations in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, and Mauritania with headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad. Currently, there are 3,000 French personnel on the ground in the Sahel G5. Otherwise France has continually provided monetary aid to the region with current aid encompassing about 500 million euros, excluding the military expenses. This aid and military involvement is given and undertaken because many countries in the region used to be French colonies. After its fall, the Organization Internationale de la Francophonie was established, the French equivalent to the British "Commonwealth of Nations". All countries in the organization receive aid from France and other members if it is needed. Because of this alliance, France has dedicated itself to help stabilize the Sahel region and establish legitimate, democratic governments in the area. France has been the leading individual outside contributor to the Sahel region and has not made any moves to abandon the project.

e) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP is a UN NGO which focuses on eradicating poverty, building resilience to crises, supporting infrastructural development, and providing energy. In the Sahel, the UNDP focuses on (i) The promotion of an integrated government of the region; (ii) The development of national and regional mechanisms capable of combating cross-border threats; (iii) The integration of humanitarian and development interventions to ensure long-term resilience. The NGO supports democratic governance in the region and tries to establish infrastructural networks. It also tries to help farmers in boosting crop productions, supply communication networks, and supply energy to

rural areas, and establish clean water sources. It has helped countries such as Mali and Nigeria supply about 25% and 21% of the population respectively with access to clean water from 2000-2015. This work is invaluable and helps save thousands of lives. Although it is making progress, the help is often too little and climate change strikes too quickly and severely, such as in Chad, where the progress has been limited to 2.5% of the population from 2000-2015. The UNDP also tries to mitigate the effects climate change has on the Sahel region, physically and humanitarily by providing food, water, and shelter to those affected.

f) World Food Programme (WFP)

Among other things, the WFP supplies countries around the world with emergency relief and food assistance. In the Sahel they work in Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Cameroon, Chad, Mauritania, and other countries trying to mitigate famine, drought, and hunger by supplying affected nations with humanitarian relief including food and water. It is an instrumental organization for the mitigation of hunger and starvation in the Sahel and is the leading contributor of food aid in the region. The WFP is severely underfunded and rarely reaches its goals for regions it assists, including countries in the Sahel. The WFP is assisting 91.4 million people in around 83 countries, the lifeline keeping many from starvation and dehydration, especially in the Sahel with its rising temperatures and population.

g) The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC is an international NGO based in Geneva which helps people in over 80 countries. In the Sahel they supply people in conflict areas and poor regions with essential resources such as water, food, and electricity, as well as medical supplies and volunteers for infrastructural support. They are known for their medical aid which gives many people a fighting chance in underdeveloped regions. The ICRC is an NGO which

spans a variety of areas of assistance and is instrumental in aiding the region with infrastructural support and medical aid.

h) United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP)

The UNEP is the UN organ for the environment and is in charge of collecting data, publishing its findings, developing action plans, and assisting countries and organizations to implement environmental measures. In the Sahel, it is currently assisting in developing measures to prevent desertification and the loss of fertile ground, as well as collecting data on temperature and rainfall patterns in order to predict the future weather patterns and help the affected regions prepare. They work closely with other NGOs such as the IUCN and especially the WFP and the UN member states.

VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

There have been many conferences, meetings, and resolutions between member states, international organizations, and NGOs to try and tackle the Sahel crisis. Some of the most noteworthy include the EU's International High Level Conference on the Sahel, the African Union Summit 31, The Nouakchott Process, and the Sahel Regional Action Plan (RAP). All of these have been multilateral attempts, concerning some of the most important organizations in the Sahel region, the EU and African Union.

The RAP is an action plan for the Sahel in order to create and secure stability in the region. It is of major importance to Europe as stability means mitigation of the migrant crisis and a drop in refugees entering the EU via North Africa. The plan focuses on four main points:

- 1) *Preventing and countering radicalisation* in order to stem the migration crisis and prevent more conflict in the area;
- 2) *Create appropriate conditions for youth* to prevent further radicalization of kids, teenagers, and young adults;

3) *Migration and Mobility* focusing on illicit smuggling and human trafficking and infrastructural support;

4) *Border management, illicit trafficking, and transnational organised crime* focusing on a crackdown on smuggling and drug trafficking and a taking actions to prevent the establishment of new smuggler routes, as well as taking action to prevent these drugs and other contraband from reaching European borders.

The EU sees Mali as an instrumental nation when it comes to smuggling and refugees. Its geography and unstable situation allow smugglers to cover large areas without being seen or recognized. Mali's location also makes it a popular route for refugees when seeking asylum in Spain via Moroccan-Spanish borders. The EU training mission in Mali works towards these goals by trying to train Malian forces in order to fight extremists and stabilize the region.

[The Nouakchott Process](#) is a plan drafted at the 31st African Union Summit. It addresses infrastructural development and capacity building programmes, and the war on terror. The African Union is desperately trying to mitigate the Sahel crisis as it continually destabilizes the organization and is one of the most desperate and complex crises on the continent. Millions of people are starving and terrorists are waging war on governments and people. Similarly to Europe, the African Union is prioritizing outreach, education, and reeducation in order to prevent radicalization and the escalation of the conflict.

In addition, the UN peacekeeping operations have made great strides forward in trying to stabilize the region and have protected the lives of civilians in areas of armed conflict. Although they are not the answer to any of the problems the Sahel faces, they do offer support in areas such as government rebuilding, government transition, the protection of civilians and refugees and the protection against insurgencies. While the UN mission has its own mandate with soldiers on the ground, the EU's mission attempts to support the Malian military and through this, help establish lasting peace. From a

military standpoint this mission can be viewed as a success, as it has achieved most of the tasks they were sent to complete.

International organizations are trying to solve this issue of incredible importance, something which has proven to be a far bigger task than initially thought back in 2010. The EU, AU, and UN are leading the charge in tackling this task and finding lasting solutions for the environmental, humanitarian, and armed conflict crises. Together, the international community has the resources to stabilize the Sahel and establish democratic governments in currently war-torn areas. Until, however, more effort and resources are directed at the situation, the area continues to destabilize and worsen, while the humanitarian crisis costs more human lives each day. Progress has been made, but the crisis is far from being solved and becoming harder to handle every year.

VII. Relevant United Nations Documents & Other Sources

a) UN Documents

- [Security Council Resolution 2100](#), 25 April 2013 (2100)

United Nations Security Council resolution 2100 was unanimously adopted in 2013. This resolution established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). It was done to stabilise the country after the Tuareg rebellion of 2012. It was officially deployed on July 1 and would turn out to be the UN's deadliest peacekeeping mission, considering 177 peacekeepers have been killed out of a force of about 15,000. The region is highly unstable and dangerous which is what makes the mission so deadly.

- [Security Council Resolution 2295](#), 29 June 2016 (2295)

The Security Council Resolution 2295 authorizes the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to adopt a more

“proactive and robust posture”. This resolution allows states to use “all necessary means” to carry out the mandate of MINUSMA within its capabilities and areas of deployment. It also extended the mandate until June 30, 2017 and decided to increase MINUSMA force levels to 13,289 military troops and 1,920 police personnel.

- [Security Council Resolution 2423](#), 28 June 2018 (2423)

The Security Council resolution 2295 further prolonged MINUSMA by one year.

b) Other Sources

- [European Parliament resolution on local authorities and civil society: Europe’s engagement in support of sustainable development](#), (22 October 2013)

This European Parliament resolution deals with the topic of sustainable development. Although, it does not involve the Sahel region, it lays out a guideline for how countries should farm in a more sustainable way. This could be used as inspiration for resolutions on this topic.

- [Sahel and West Africa Club \(SWAC\) Annual Report](#), *OECD* (2017)

The Sahel and West Africa Club is an independent, international platform. Its secretariat is hosted at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Its mission is to promote regional policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people in the Sahel and West Africa. Every year, SWAC publishes a report on the situation in the Sahel region and West Africa. This report outlines and discusses the impact of the activities undertaken by the SWAC Secretariat in 2017 in service of its mission and objectives. The programme of work 2017/2018 revolves around 4 pillars: food and nutrition issues, gender, cities and security.

- [ICRC Sahel Annual Report](#), *International Committee of the Red Cross*, (2017)

Every year, the International Committee of the Red Cross publishes a report on the situation in the Sahel region. It addresses many aspects of the situation including poverty, environmental change, terrorism, droughts, conflicts, migration, starvation and more.

- [African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa \(Kampala Convention\)](#), *African Union*, (December 06, 2012)

The Kampala Convention is a regional treaty which addresses the internal displacement caused by armed conflict, natural disasters and large-scale development projects in Africa. Article 5 specifically states a state's responsibilities for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons, whose displacement is the result of "natural or human made disasters, including climate change". As of 2016 it has been signed by 40 and ratified by 25 of the 54 member states of the African Union.

VIII. Questions to Consider

- What is the definition of a "climate refugee"? What rights should they be given?
- Are the UN peacekeeping missions in Mali, Sudan, and South Sudan actually stabilizing the region?
- How can individuals and local activists play an increased role in the solving of the Sahel crisis?
- How could the ethnic tensions present in the region be addressed?
- How could the radicalisation of the populations be combated?

- How could the role of the central government be supported and enforced?
- What limitations, if any, should be placed on foreign governments active in the Sahel region?

IX. Possible Solutions

Finding solutions to the situation in the Sahel region will prove difficult due to the complexity of the issue and the different tiers of problems. The delegates must consider both short-term solutions to ensure the safety and survival of the populations within the region while also finding long-term solutions to fight political corruption and be self-sustaining without external help. Delegates must also consider that the weather conditions, that are one of the roots of the issues, will not ease unless measures are put in place to combat climate change with multilateral support. States must find ways to adapt to the increasing temperature and extreme weather conditions on a sustainable level.

Short term solutions: in the past there has been foreign support for the people in the region that are suffering due to starvation and displacement. Measures such as the creation of refugee camps and providing basic necessities like food and water have been taken and are effective in helping those who are in immediate danger. The aid has not been on a large enough scale to help all of those that are suffering due to these reasons. Another problem that may be faced if one were to simply provide financial aid as a form of short term solution, is that within the governments there is mass corruption and no promise that the money would be used in a constructive way. There is a danger that this distribution of aid for political gain, allocating funds to those who have been loyal to them. This firstly creates mistrust between the government and the population and it forces them to be loyal to a certain faction because otherwise they would face

starvation. Another issue that makes international aid difficult in implementation is the lack of trustworthy data on population figures when allocating the funds because it is difficult to assess which areas need how much. The delegates must think of means of providing instant relief on a large scale seeing as the percentage of the population that are suffering due to lack of food and water span the entire Sahel region. One of the possibilities that have been implemented in the past is the deployment of UN Peacekeepers. Another is the creation of more refugee camps so that the refugees and the IDPs have shelter and resources after having fled the conditions in their home.

Long-term solutions: Finding solutions to the long-term problems will prove to be the more difficult task because they involve having to make the countries within the Sahel region self sufficient and decreasing the impact of climate change. Secondly, delegates must come up with solutions to combat the extensive hunger problem in the region so that they are not permanently dependent on the support of outside organizations. Lastly, the delegates also must consider this issue of 'ethnicity' in the Sahel region seeing as the groups are extremely distrustful of each other which makes governing them a daunting task.

X. Conclusion

The Sahel region is one that is simultaneously facing waves of difficulties that seem to never cease. As a result of extreme weather conditions, which are caused by uncontrolled climate changes, the majority of the population is unfed and without shelter. The crops are failing, and the livestock are not producing what is necessary to keep entire states alive, therefore, the rates of starvation across the region are steadily increasing. This has resulted in mass displacement throughout central and northern Africa, which in turn has escalated conflicts. The governments have become weak due to internal corruption and loss of legitimacy, and therefore they have become

susceptible to a host of military coups that have occurred in the past at the hands of Jihadist militant groups.

Although the Sahel region has faced and does still continue to face difficulties that challenge the everyday functionings of the region, with the help of the UN and other bodies, the possibility of creating a stable and self sufficient Sahel region is becoming more and more possible.

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