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1. Letter from the Secretariat

2. Introduction to the committee

DISEC is the first committee of the General Assembly committees in the United Nations. It is short for The Disarmament and International Security Committee. People in the UN come together annually to discuss current problems regarding weapon and security threats in the world. DISEC aims to make the world a safer place. It tries to do so by lowering the amount and lethality of weapons and strengthening law enforcement. United Nations parliament members can debate on current topics and vote for polls on whatever they think the UN should do in those matters. These discussions turn into frameworks for government figures to shape their laws on. One thing to note, as DISEC's primary focus is maintaining peace, the discussions inside the committee can't and mustn't create legal issues, security vulnerabilities, and most importantly wars or political conflicts. Over the years, the committee has led to the creation of many laws across the globe to make the earth we live on a safer place.

3. Introduction to the Agenda Item

The Sahel region describes the dry and desert-like areas located in Africa, in the southern part of the Sahara Desert. Countries such as Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Sudan are just some of the countries that are in the Sahel. Over the past decades, this area has been facing a severe humanitarian crisis. The region suffers from the consequences of three issues: climate change, extreme poverty, and violent conflicts. As the soil becomes increasingly dry and incapable of producing crops, those who depend on agriculture and livestock become vulnerable. They have to fight for access to the resources they need to survive.

As a result, the region faces one of the most unstable situations in the world today. Groups associated with Al-Qaeda and ISIS are actively controlling huge territories in the Sahel. Terrorist attacks happen every day, resulting in deaths of dozens of civilians. Governments of the affected countries are too powerless to do something about it; they also face the issue of constant instability as nearly all of them have experienced military coups in the 21st century. For example, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger witnessed military coups in the last few years. Attempts have been made by foreign bodies, such as the French army and later Russian mercenaries, to assist in combating the militant groups; however, efforts have proven futile.

The humanitarian crisis in Somalia is of grave nature. The citizens of Somalia are faced with the inability to access sufficient food, water supplies, and medical facilities. Children are highly sensitive, and many of them have developed malnutrition and other diseases that negatively affect their development. In most cases, schools are either shut down or destroyed, making the current generation grow up uneducated. It becomes extremely hard for humanitarian agencies to offer aid due to the dangerous situations they are forced into. What makes solving the crisis even harder is that everything is linked together.

4. Key Terms and Definitions

Terrorism and Violence: There is a growing presence of terrorist organizations in the region (including JNIM and IS-Sahel), along with increasing inter-communal violence. Attacks on civilians, schools, and health facilities have risen in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

Displacement (and internally displaced people or IDPs): Millions of individuals have been displaced because of the violence and instability in the region. There are also Internally Displaced People, or IDPs for short, who have been displaced but remain inside their own country. By 2026, an estimated 6.8 million persons had been displaced, 3.2 million of them being internally displaced.

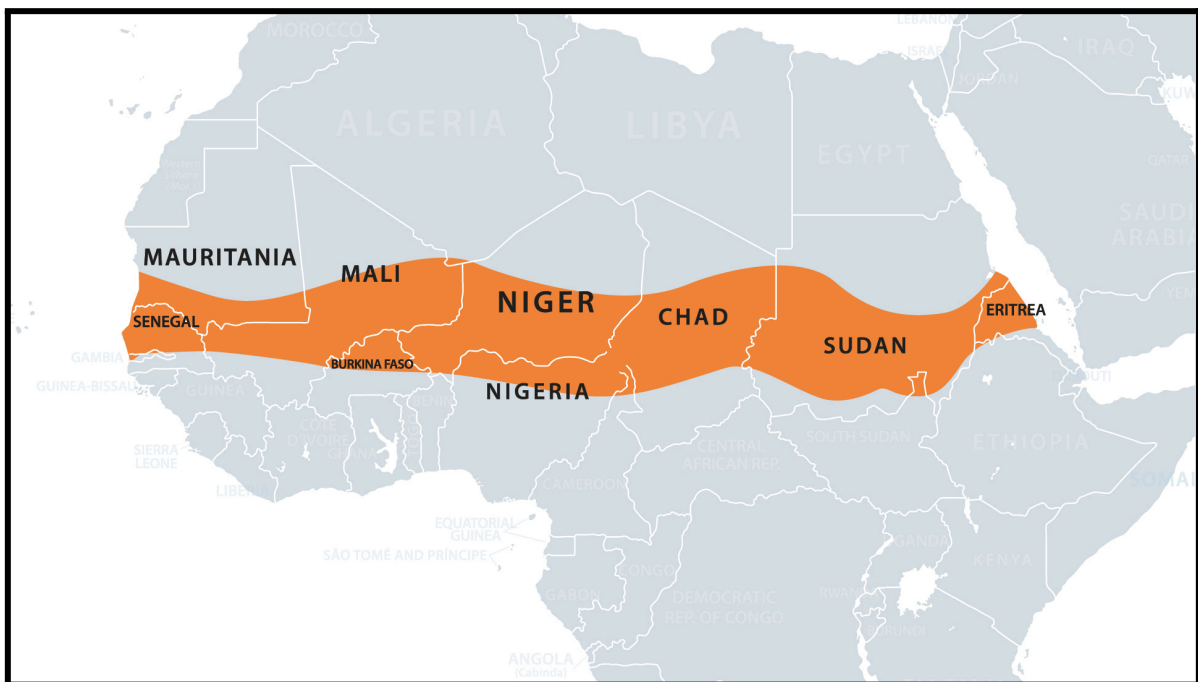
Humanitarian Emergency: The crisis features severe vulnerability, with high levels of food insecurity, lack of access to potable water, and malnutrition rates. Women and children are especially vulnerable, making up 80 percent of those displaced.

Political Instability: The region suffers from significant political instability, notably military coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, leading to weak governance and fragmented security efforts.

Food Insecurity: A situation where people do not have reliable access to enough nutritious food for a healthy life. In the Sahel region, food insecurity is caused by a combination of conflict, climate change, poverty, and weak agricultural systems. It can lead to malnutrition, displacement, and increased instability, making it both a humanitarian and security issue.

5. The Sahel Region

The Sahel region covers an area stretching about 5,400 kilometers, starting from Mauritania and Senegal in the west to Nigeria and Chad in the east. It is generally mentioned as a semi-arid strip and is among the poorest and most fragile regions in the world. Many countries are a part of the Sahel including Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Sudan. While the area has long suffered from poverty, inefficient governments, and environmental challenges, in the past decade, it has evolved into a global security crisis. Currently, the number of deaths from terrorist activities in the Sahel exceeds the total number of victims of terrorism worldwide.



**a picture of the Sahel Region on the map*

6. History of the Sahel Crisis

A great part of the origins of the current Sahel crisis can be traced back to the events that occurred between the 1970s and 2015 in the area. Throughout these years, the Sahel suffered from severe economic, political, environmental, and armed conflicts, as well as from the growth of extremist organizations. Gradually, the Sahel turned into one of the least stable regions of the world.

6.1. Environmental Degradation and Economic Disasters

Firstly, the Sahel was struck by many droughts and famines in past years, before the 1970s. Because of prolonged dry periods, there were no harvests and many livestock died, which made millions of people face hunger. Since Sahelian countries relied greatly on agriculture and herding, these events caused economic disasters. Governments were unable to help their citizens because of the weak economy and lack of necessary resources, while the process of desertification only increased the problem, as the Sahara Desert started moving south.

Climate shifts hit the Sahel harder than almost anywhere else on Earth. This region feels the weight of rising temperatures more intensely. Problems grow when environmental stress meets existing instability. Droughts exacerbate the region's already weak and infertile soil and economy, leaving only more problems for the locals.

South of the Sahara, land once fertile now cracks under relentless sun. Starting in the 1970s, desert sands crept steadily forward. Great droughts struck without warning. Livestock vanished during these dry spells. Nomads, which used to earn their living through their livestock, fell hungry, much like their animals. Once a place of peaceful living, it became one of the world's hardest places to live in. This was only the foundation, for the Sahel's more dangerous problems were still to come.

6.2. The Effect of the September 11th Attacks on the Sahel

After the terrorist attacks made on September 11th, 2001, terrorism became a more sensitive topic and was given more attention so that more terrorist attacks aren't made. Extremist groups with links to Al-Qaeda, the organizers of the September 11th attacks, began spreading across the Sahel. For example, members of the terrorist group Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) used several different means to expand such as kidnapping, smuggling and weapon trafficking. Poor soil means a weak economy which means weak government control which results in much weaker border security, which is why they were able to do these things so easily.

6.3. The 2011 Libyan Collapse and the Malian Catalyst

Out past the Sahel's edge, things first started unraveling. When NATO stepped into Libya during 2011, it cracked open what came next. Gaddafi's downfall wasn't just local news - ripples spread fast. One collapse led straight to another, then another after that, so on and so forth.

Back home in northern Mali, thousands of Tuareg fighters returned, men once hired by Gaddafi. Following their defeat abroad, they carried advanced surface-to-air missiles across the border. Armored trucks rolled behind them, loaded with gear taken from Libyan

stockpiles. These rebels now held firepower far beyond what Mali's military could match. What had been a modest defense force faced an unmatched wave of heavy arms.

Out of nowhere in 2012, the MNLA, pushing for a nonreligious independent region in northern Mali, made their move. Yet soon after, groups with deeper pockets and harsher goals moved in. While the MNLA wanted self-rule without religion leading it, outfits such as AQIM and Ansar Dine had different plans entirely. These factions cared less about national borders, more about enforcing strict rule under their vision of Islamic law. So instead of freedom rising, control shifted sideways - to forces aiming much further than mere independence.

6.4. Failed Internationalism: Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA

Back in 2013, as hardline factions advanced on Bamako, the capital of Mali, global forces stepped in. Yet it wasn't a sudden move; pressure had been building. Though distant, foreign powers reacted fast. Because hesitation could have meant collapse, coordinated actions followed. While some doubted their reach, boots hit the ground anyway. Since retreat wasn't an option for local leaders, outside help became unavoidable. Even so, tensions simmered beneath the response. From that point forward, presence grew. Not loudly, but steadily.

Out of nowhere, French forces moved fast to reclaim places such as Timbuktu under Operations Serval and later Barkhane. Victory looked certain at first, yet militants adapted quickly once face-to-face battles ended. Instead of standing ground, fighters melted away, choosing ambushes, roadside bombs, then vanishing without trace.



By 2015, attacks that started in Mali spread into Burkina Faso and Niger, zeroing in on the zone where three borders meet. Even though there were 15,000 UN soldiers stationed there through MINUSMA, along with many French military forces, killings each year kept climbing. People living there slowly lost trust, seeing outside help as useless or worse, a modern form of control from abroad. Because of this shift, doubt took root where hope had once been.

6.5. The "Coup Contagion" and the Geopolitical Pivot (2020 - Present)

Out of old defeats came new marches into government affairs by armed forces. Though time moved forward, echoes from the past pulled strategy back. What followed was less surprise than repetition dressed as a response. From collapse rose familiar steps - troops stepping where laws once stood. Not every repeat sounds the same; this one carried heavier boots.

Outrage grew when elected leaders failed to protect people from violence. Then came power grabs Mali saw two, first in 2020 then again in 2021. Next was Burkina Faso, twice during

2022. After that, Niger fell under military control in 2023. Each new regime claimed they were taking charge to reclaim true independence

Suddenly, power changed hands when fresh military leaders cut links to Western allies. After booting out French troops, Mali along with Burkina Faso pushed the UN to leave too. Instead of old partners, they turned toward Moscow's private fighters first Wagner, now rebranded as Africa Corps. Overnight, what was once framed as fighting insurgents became tangled in worldwide power plays. Talks that might have worked before now face far tougher roadblocks.

6.6. Crisis Development Overview

1960s–1990s: Political marginalization and ethnic tension.

Back then, droughts tightened their grip on food supplies. Meanwhile, scattered Al-Qaeda units began showing up in new regions.

That year began with unrest in Libya. From there, things spilled into Mali. Weapons moved across borders. Local forces lost control. Governments struggled to respond. By season's end, entire regions had shifted hands. There wasn't any authority anymore. Only chaos.

2013–2020: Expansion of jihadist violence and failed Western military responses.

From 2020 to 2026, power shifted through military takeovers across parts of West Africa. The formation of the Alliance of Sahel States changed regional dynamics quickly. Instead of turning toward traditional allies, these nations built new ties with Moscow. Russia stepped into a growing role once held by Western forces. Political decisions moved sharply eastward during this stretch. Security partnerships evolved under different global influences.

7. Current Situation

What began as scattered rebellions now reveals deeper fractures across the region. Not merely separate uprisings, but overlapping breakdowns fueled by weak institutions, climate extremes, and foreign rivalries unfolding at once. Even if attack numbers shift slightly month to month, according to certain analyses, the area still bears the heaviest toll from militant actions worldwide - close to fifty percent of fatalities tied to such violence occur here. From fragile governance to external interference, conditions feed one another without clear beginning or end.

7.1. The Genesis: The 2011 Arab Spring and the Libyan Fallout

From 2011, turmoil in Libya reshaped the region's fragile balance. What followed was not sudden chaos but a slow unraveling across borders. Power vanished where it had once been tightly held. Instability flowed outward like water through cracked earth. Arms spread widely after state control disappeared. Militant networks found space to form where authority failed. Old tensions reemerged under new banners. Movement across deserts increased without oversight. Local conflicts absorbed external influences easily. Security weakened steadily in neighboring states. The absence of central rule opened multiple pathways for disorder. Regional dynamics shifted without clear turning points.

After Tripoli collapsed, advanced weapons began moving south. Because of this shift, Tuareg groups in northern Mali gained access to powerful arms. As a result, their forces grew strong

enough to overpower state militaries. Their capabilities changed dramatically with the arrival of these supplies.

Beginning in 2012, conflict emerged when forces composed of non-religious independence groups joined with militants tied to Al-Qaeda took control of northern Mali. Although military efforts led by France regained cities including Gao and Timbuktu through Operation Serval, these actions did not eliminate small armed factions that withdrew into remote desert regions. Despite temporary gains, persistent threats remained due to the vast, difficult landscape allowing insurgents to regroup.

The so-called "governance gap" emerged when global responses emphasized armed strategies, bypassing deeper issues - widespread destitution, missing public infrastructure in remote regions, alongside limited job pathways for young populations. As a result, rebel movements did not dissolve; instead, they shifted quietly into reorganization. Though force was applied, stability failed to take hold.



7.2. 2015–2019 Expansion And Climate Conflict

At that time, what began as a confined struggle within Mali evolved into a wider destabilization, reaching across borders into Burkina Faso then Niger. Though distant at first glance, each nation became entangled through shifting patterns of unrest. From quiet corners to open plains, instability moved without warning. Where one conflict faded, another took shape nearby. Previously isolated incidents linked together under growing pressure. Not all effects were immediate; some unfolded slowly, like dust settling after wind.

What emerged was a change in conflict form - no longer framed by insurgency against authority, but shaped through communal lines. Instead of confrontation with the state, communities turned against one another. Behind this shift stood extremist actors who exploited deep-rooted tensions. Old disputes between settled farming populations and mobile herding groups were manipulated into tools of warfare.

One point five times faster than elsewhere on Earth, temperatures rise across the Sahel. Arable ground vanishes as deserts spread and rains fail without pattern. What were once shared resources now spark clashes over water access and pasture use. Into these gaps move armed factions - JNIM and ISGS among them - who settle disputes, offer security, gain loyalty. Their presence grows where state authority fades.

7.3. 2020–2023 The Coup Belt and Breakdown of Institutions

From 2020 to 2023, democratic rule collapsed across the area, followed by a wave of military takeovers labeled "Coup Contagion" by experts in governance. Though stability was once assumed, power quietly shifted into unelected hands. Following that shift came widespread

institutional erosion. When elections were held, they lost meaning gradually. One outcome stood clear: authority no longer stemmed from public mandate. Instead, control emerged through force and strategic removal of opposition. As norms faded, repetition became a pattern. Each new takeover seemed to normalize the last. With little resistance, precedent gained momentum. By the end of 2023, few functioning democracies remained standing

Unexpected failure marked several nations once seen as stable. From Mali, then Ouagadougou, later Niamey - each shift followed a deepening crisis. Officials in uniform claimed civilian rule had stalled under external pressures. Where elected leaders moved slowly, soldiers believed they saw clarity. Constraints tied to global standards became a stated reason for intervention. What came after unfolded outside diplomatic tradition.

Even after shifting to military governance, authority weakened across regions. Around half of all land fell beyond government reach during this period. In key regional centers, access was cut off completely by armed groups. Supply lines disappeared under extremist grip. Cities endured severe shortages as a result. Control over movement allowed dominance without direct confrontation.



7.4. New Geopolitical Shifts 2024–2026 and the AES

A shift marks this period, moving beyond conventional global partnerships while a fragmented Sahel takes shape. Power spreads unevenly across regions as old alliances lose strength. Stability declines where centralized influence once held. New centers arise outside former frameworks. Balance shifts quietly beneath surface changes. Direction alters without clear consensus.

Later in 2023, then again through early 2024, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger established what became known as the Alliance of Sahel States - a collective security arrangement stepping in after the collapse of the G5 Sahel initiative. Following this shift, departure from ECOWAS followed, carried out officially, marking a notable fracture within West Africa's political coordination and halting further joint economic development among those nations.

Marked by movement away from Western influence, the period 2025–2026 sees France, EU, and U.S. presence recede across parts of Africa. Instead, collaboration with Russia's Africa Corps - once known as Wagner - takes shape. Security efforts now stress military control rather than broad stability measures. Reports of harm to non-combatants rise under this model. Oversight from global institutions weakens at the same time. While operational reach expands, accountability dims.

Strained ties with neighboring countries such as Ivory Coast and Benin now mark the lowest point in years. Across border lines, claims of indirect military involvement emerge alongside reports of sheltering rebel factions. Tension builds quietly here, where political distrust feeds into broader instability across the Sahel region.

7.5. The Humanitarian Catastrophe: Food Insecurity and Displacement

A worsening spiral of distrust grows alongside immense human suffering, unmatched in scope. While dangers multiply, civilian hardship reaches levels never seen before.

One out of every three people across the Sahel now struggles to find enough food. Where violence spreads, fields lie empty - farming too dangerous under threat. Movement halts where checkpoints rise, supply chains snap shut. Prices climb fast once trade stops flowing freely through towns. Hunger weakens bodies slowly, yet it strengthens the pull of armed factions. A man watches children go hungry; that sight sharpens desperation. What some call a wage others see as survival dressed differently.

Millions now count among the internally displaced. When homes are lost, city systems buckle under sudden demand - crowded shelters strain resources. Because services weaken, tensions grow within communities. Where despair spreads, so does vulnerability to extreme ideologies. Unchecked movement reshapes urban margins in quiet but lasting ways.



Hidden networks thrive where law ends. Where official oversight fails, militant factions dominate small-scale gold extraction. Profits from these operations fund weapons purchases. Arms move across loosely guarded frontiers, arriving from regions torn by war. Control over illegal mining sustains armed resistance. Criminal structures - built on gunrunning and metal smuggling - anchor the revolt's survival.

8. Risks of Enforcing Counterterrorist Measures

Though removing extremist leaders stands central to DISEC's purpose, approaches taken in the Sahel frequently bring unintended burdens. Such outcomes fall across three areas - humanitarian strain, political instability, societal disruption - with each shaping how delegates frame future strategies. Because effects linger beyond immediate objectives, careful balance defines any lasting response.

8.1. Civilian Casualties and the "Radicalization Trap"

Occasionally, motion-based tactics such as air bombardments or intense land maneuvers bring unintended consequences. Though effective in execution, these methods tend to affect surrounding environments. With every calculated strike, civilian structures may face disruption. Rarely are outcomes confined strictly to military targets. Unplanned impacts emerge despite precision planning. When velocity meets density, secondary effects follow. Even focused aggression alters nearby conditions. Consequences unfold beyond intended zones. Despite controls, adjacent areas remain vulnerable. The aftermath often includes unforeseen disruptions.

Among those far from battle lines, harm arrives quietly during missions near villages. Though unintended, bloodshed among locals follows such actions. With each life taken by mistake, stories shift. Grief turns into tales of sacrifice, shaped by factions including JNIM and ISGS. These accounts then pull new recruits toward conflict. The weight of loss becomes fuel, repurposed beyond its origin.

When people face harm from national or outside armed actors, resentment can grow. Because of this tension, some groups begin seeing rebel factions as allies rather than threats. As trust in official forces declines, resistance movements gain quiet support. Instead of reducing violence, certain interventions deepen communal fractures. What begins as order enforcement sometimes fuels long-term unrest.

When authorities apply excessive force - such as holding people without trial or carrying out unlawful acts - public trust begins to fade. Because of such measures, the legitimacy once held by governing bodies weakens visibly. Extremist narratives gain ground where civil liberties shrink, especially when rulers appear harsh or disconnected from ethical norms. In those spaces, messages framing power as unjust or faithless find more listeners.

8.2. Humanitarian Obstruction and the Shrinking of Aid Space

Where assistance faces barriers, movement grows harder. Yet access diminishes under layered constraints. Though needs rise, entry points dwindle. Because regulations tighten, operations slow. When oversight increases, presence shrinks. As risks accumulate, reach declines. While demands expand, capacity recedes.

Where security actions grow, movement of urgent help tends to shrink. Barriers rise - not only in stone but in rules - blocking support from arriving. When controls tighten, access fades for people awaiting relief. Protection efforts sometimes sideline humanitarian flow. Restrictions pile up, quietly halting supplies where they are most needed.

Humanitarian aid movements now face heightened risk due to armed activity along major transport corridors. Where military operations intensify, supply efforts often become entangled - sometimes intentionally so - amid retaliatory actions by insurgent groups opposing state campaigns. Routes once used safely now carry danger with every passage.

Blocked by military orders, areas across Liptako-Gourma remain out of reach for aid groups such as MSF and the WFP. Because of imposed curfews and restricted movement, access halts entirely. Months pass with no relief reaching those in need. As a result, hunger spreads while clinics stand empty. Such conditions deepen the crisis outlined under Section 3, where survival becomes uncertain. From above, silence grows louder than response.

Where aid workers offer care in zones held by listed entities, legal boundaries may blur.



Though help is strictly health-related, rules meant to stop terrorism might still apply. In such cases, simply being present carries risk. Laws aiming at militants could affect those treating civilians. Presence alone becomes a concern under certain interpretations. Medical missions

face scrutiny, despite neutral purpose. When legislation stretches too far, support work gets caught within its reach.

8.3. Political Instability and the "Coup Contagion"

Under heavy demands, state armed forces pursuing rapid anti-terror results have sometimes triggered breakdowns within home governance structures.

Resentment builds within armed forces when missions begin lacking proper gear or defined objectives. Such conditions sparked takeovers across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger during the early 2020s. Despite stated goals, confusion in direction often deepens discontent among ranks. Without alignment between government plans and battlefield needs, trust erodes gradually. From this erosion emerged abrupt shifts in power. One outcome - repeated in several nations - was seizure of authority by military factions. Behind each event lay unmet expectations and mounting pressure.

Spending heavily on defense while reducing funds for public needs erodes trust in governance during the Sahel conflict. When schools, legal systems, and medical care lose support, authority weakens unexpectedly. Instability grows quietly under such conditions. Power shifts occur without proper process when foundations crumble slowly.

Public trust often erodes when national defense depends on outside forces. When French operations like Barkhane take center stage, local populations may see their leaders as extensions of distant agendas. Such views open space for strongman rule under slogans of self-rule. Independence becomes a rallying cry, not through debate but through force framed as liberation.

8.4. Socio-Economic Disruption and the Shadow Economy

When counter-terrorism efforts go forward, lives of intended beneficiaries may collapse instead. Though protection is the goal, survival systems sometimes break under pressure applied. Where force moves swiftly, daily routines risk unraveling quietly. Even well-planned missions might hollow out economic stability slowly. Protection strategies occasionally erase income paths completely. As actions unfold across regions, local economies often weaken without notice. While threats diminish, basic earning methods fade just as fast.

Across some war-torn regions, farming areas have vanished - over time eroded by troop maneuvers and deliberate burnings. As much as eighty percent of usable soil now lies ruined, stripped bare through repeated conflict actions. With harvests gone, rural families lose their means of feeding themselves. Without stable income or crops, many find survival difficult under normal terms. Some shift toward joining radical factions - not out of belief, but due to lack of alternatives. A steady source of food becomes rare; so does dignity.

When checkpoints block militants, they block herds too. Movement halts, markets stall. Borders shut, goods do not pass. As trade fades, income vanishes. People turn elsewhere - often to hidden networks. Survival shifts toward routes outside law. Crops rot where they grow. Economies shrink without warning. Life adapts in silence. Dependence forms slowly on what remains available.

Where conflict drives people from their homes, city edges swell unpredictably. As large numbers settle beyond urban cores, pressures mount on fragile infrastructure. Though authorities face existing challenges, sudden population shifts deepen instability. Where governance falters, overcrowding invites unrest. When shelters rise without planning, risks spread quietly through neighborhoods.

8.5. The Risk of Unconventional Partnerships

With Sahelian nations shifting from Western-led security frameworks to different alliances - such as those involving Russia's military units - unforeseen challenges begin to surface. While cooperation expands in one direction, vulnerabilities appear elsewhere. Not every arrangement brings improved stability. Where traditional oversight fades, gaps form. New dependencies develop without clear accountability. In such transitions, consequences often arrive quietly.

When transparency is missing, agreements involving private military firms may bypass essential oversight expected under international standards. Without clear scrutiny, civilian populations face higher chances of harm during operations. Oversight gaps emerge when such groups operate without independent review typical of multilateral frameworks.

When global powers treat the Sahel as a strategic arena, lasting unrest may follow. Local needs risk fading behind foreign agendas. Decisions made far away shape outcomes on the ground. Stability becomes secondary to influence. Conflict stretches longer when outside actors pursue their own aims.

9. Urgent Issues

9.1. Health Problems

The state of health of the Sahel population is a very urgent matter since the conflict has undermined the health care infrastructure. The access to health care is extremely poor since in general, people from the Sahel area have the life expectancy that is 20 years lower than in Switzerland. As of 2024, in Burkina Faso alone 424 health facilities were left non-operational due to violent attacks and 309 were operating at the minimum level.

The biggest risk for people in the Sahel region is the deadly combination of malnutrition and epidemics of infectious diseases. It is expected that during 2024-2025 about 11.2 million children under the age of five would be suffering from acute malnutrition in five Sahelian countries. Namely, in Chad there would be 537,000 cases of SAM while in Niger there are expected 412,000 cases. As a result, such conditions increase the likelihood of death caused by ordinary diseases, such as diarrhea and respiratory infections. Additionally, the Sahel suffers from simultaneous outbreaks of such dangerous infectious diseases as measles, polio, yellow fever, and hepatitis E. In 2024, there was an outbreak of measles in Niger resulting in 12,000 cases.

In addition to physical ailments, the psychological trauma experienced by children as a result of the conflict is no less critical. Millions of children are haunted by memories of violence and torture. According to surveys, more than 53% of pupils of the Central Sahel consider school as an insecure place. Consequently, the "lost generation" is likely to develop

conditions like PTSD and depression in future without any psychosocial aid. As a result, children become more susceptible to recruitment into armed forces. The Better Learning Program (BLP) has already begun using breathwork and emotion regulation techniques to help kids in Dori, Burkina Faso.

9.2. Agricultural and Economical Problems

Agriculture and livestock are the main ways to make a living in the Sahel, which combined, account for the employment of 80 percent of the population. However, there are a few obstacles in the way. The Sahel is warming 1.5 times faster than the rest of the world. This means fertile land and usable water is getting harder to obtain by the day. Aside from that, the outbreak of war has made it difficult for farmers to access their farms. In some cases, 80 percent of the arable lands have been destroyed. Food prices are rising quickly, and food imports into the region are estimated to increase by three times by 2025. Additionally, the split between AES and ECOWAS nations has led to trade barriers, which makes it harder to maintain the economic sustainability of these nations.

9.3. Diplomatic Incidents

Years passed. A new pattern took hold across the Sahel. By 2026, old alliances had frayed. Foreign involvement once common now faded. Instead, tensions grew within the region itself. Power shifted. Governments that were elected gave way to military rule. This happened in Mali first. Then came Burkina Faso. Niger followed close behind. Each change pulled the area further from outside influence. Local disputes began to shape decisions. Geopolitical lines redrew themselves quietly. What emerged was different from what came before.

The Fall of Western Alliances

Security pacts with Western countries began unraveling, marking a turning point in foreign relations. Not agreement after agreement held firm under pressure. What stood for decades now frayed at the edges. Trust eroded slowly, then all at once. Each withdrawal signaled deeper fractures below the surface. Institutions once seen as unshakable started losing ground. Behind closed doors, decisions reshaped old alliances. Distance grew where cooperation used to run deep. Shifts unfolded quietly, yet changed everything.

Out on the tarmac, soldiers packed gear under orders that had come down fast - Mali said go, then Burkina followed. As distrust built up after power shifts, old alliances began cracking at the seams. A mission once seen as routine turned into history books overnight when leaders called it quits. Boots off the ground came one by one until none remained where they'd stayed for years. What was normal just months before became impossible to imagine.

By 2023, Mali had asked the UN to pull out its big peace operation - MINUSMA. That exit shut down a massive mission meant to steady the country. With it gone, space opened up where few groups stepped in fast enough. The absence left gaps neither diplomacy nor patrols could quickly close.

Now things shift. The U.S. started by helping with spy work and training. Yet its influence wobbles lately. Countries in the Sahel look elsewhere now - turning to allies who skip lectures on rights when handing out weapons.

The AES-ECOWAS Schism

A rift has opened across West Africa as three central Sahel nations step away from ECOWAS in a move that shifts regional power. Not cooperation but separation now defines their stance toward the bloc once seen as unifying. This break isn't sudden - tensions built quietly before reaching a point where alliance gave way to distance. Instead of shared goals, diverging priorities pulled them apart. Where unity was expected, fracture lines appeared. The change marks less an event than a quiet unraveling over time. One by one, trust weakened until formal ties snapped without warning.

After the takeovers in Mali and Niger, harsh trade limits plus border closures arrived through ECOWAS moves meant to restore elected rule. Pushback followed swiftly - leaders in charge hit back, calling those penalties foreign-driven pressure disguised as reform.

Out of nowhere, Mali joined forces with Burkina Faso and Niger near the end of 2023. Not waiting for approval, they launched something called the Alliance of Sahel States. Right away, it put pressure on ECOWAS by stepping outside its reach. A shared security deal came next - no turning back. Trade routes shifted because of it. Cooperation against armed groups across borders got harder too.

Once strong, the G5 Sahel began crumbling when Mali stepped out in 2022. Not much had changed on the ground, officials said back then. Outside influence played a part in their exit. What remained of cooperation slowed to a halt afterward. Countries once linked by strategy now moved apart. Diplomacy among Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania lost its rhythm. Meetings faded. Joint efforts weakened. Trust wore thin across capitals. Coordination that existed before slipped away quietly.

The Shift Toward Russia and Other Global Players

When relations with Western nations weakened, leaders across the Sahel turned elsewhere for support in defense and diplomacy.

Out of nowhere, some governments turned to Russian paramilitary units for help guarding key sites and teaching troops. Because of that, tensions grew sharply with both the EU and United Nations. Questions about openness popped up - alongside serious unease around how abuses are handled.

Out past allies aren't the only ones they turn to now. Equipment and drills come more often from fresh sources. These ties feel like breathing room - less pressure from old powers watching every move. Independence takes shape in quiet deals. Choices widen when help arrives from unexpected corners. Sovereignty isn't shouted; it's built through new handshakes.

Strained Neighborly Relations

Fear spread beyond borders when the crisis jumped from one country to the next. Diplomats scrambled as tensions quietly settled into nearby capitals overnight.

Blame flies across borders as nations in the Sahel point fingers at nearby states, claiming they shelter militants. One moment it's whispers, next it's loud claims - each country insists others enable violence. Trust? Thin as paper. Some say support slips through quiet roads, hidden movements under broad daylight. Responses come sharp, often late, always defensive. Accusations loop without end, feeding unease like wind feeds flame.

Out here, where borders blur, loose ties let weapons slip through. Criminals move fast because oversight slows down. Trust dips when neighbors fail to sync efforts. Across AES

zones, shaky teamwork feeds wider AU tensions. Lines on maps mean little without real cooperation.

10. Past Actions

Despite vast financial inputs, outcomes remain uncertain. From above, foreign interventions once dominated by force now splinter into local coalitions. Progress stalls where safety and growth should align. Budgets swell yet coordination falters across actors. Beneath broad strategies, on-the-ground realities resist integration. Efforts stretch wide but fail to deepen. Where stability was expected, fragmentation persists.

10.1. Unilateral and Bilateral Military Interventions

At first, reactions came mostly from ex-colonial nations alongside their Western partners focused on countering rebel gains through military means. Though non-military aid followed later, initial efforts centered on armed protection as violence spread across regions. Over time, strategies shifted slightly toward support beyond weapons and troops.

France began Operation Serval in 2013 after Mali asked for help. The aim emerged when militants pushed south toward the capital. Response time proved critical during early stages of deployment. Success followed swiftly due to precise air and ground coordination. Conventional combat methods played a central role throughout the effort. Despite challenges, movement into Bamako by armed factions stopped completely. Tactical outcomes are still examined today in military studies. Recognition tends to focus on speed and execution rather than long-term impact.

Beginning in 2014, Operation Barkhane spanned nearly eight years before ending in 2022. Across five Sahelian nations known collectively as the G5, more than five thousand French military personnel took part. Though key militant figures were eliminated during the campaign, unrest continued spreading through countryside regions. Over time, skepticism grew regarding external influence and long-term effectiveness. By conclusion, local resistance combined with strategic reassessment prompted full withdrawal.

In the United States, strategy leaned toward minimal presence. Emphasis was placed on strengthening allied capabilities. A large drone facility rose in Agadez, within Niger - designated Air Base 201. Support arrived through shared surveillance data. Intelligence streams went to French units alongside regional troops. Operations unfolded without broad deployment. Assistance remained indirect in nature. Focus stayed fixed on enabling others rather than leading missions. Tools provided were primarily observational. Engagement avoided deep military involvement. Presence took shape behind the scenes. Coordination happened across distances. Aid flowed via technology and information exchange. Action relied upon remote assets. Efforts centered on observation support. Involvement did not include ground offensives. Planning favored restraint above expansion. Resources supported existing actors. Intervention meant supplying eyes in the sky.

10.2. Multilateral Peacekeeping: The MINUSMA Experiment

Established in 2013, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali - known as MINUSMA - has ranked among the costliest peacekeeping efforts ever undertaken by the organization. Despite its goals, conditions on the ground quickly turned perilous. Over time, it gained recognition not only for scale but also for risk level faced by

personnel deployed there. Few operations have matched its combination of financial burden and threat exposure since inception.

Though assigned to shield civilians and uphold the 2015 Peace Agreement, MINUSMA faced a shifting ground. Where stability once lingered, peacekeepers instead encountered hostility without warning. As conditions unraveled, their role transformed beyond original intent. With no accord left to sustain, soldiers became focal points of irregular assaults. The mission endured - yet its purpose blurred amid escalating threats.

By late 2023, around fifteen thousand personnel had left. This exit followed a demand from Mali's interim leadership after the army takeover. Rather than cooperate, officials claimed MINUSMA worsened unrest. Their call came abruptly - insisting on swift departure. As troops pulled out, the United Nations presence sharply diminished across the area. Once strong, its role now faded into uncertainty.

10.3. Regional Initiatives: The G5 Sahel and the AES

It became clear the crisis did not stop at borders, so African nations began shaping shared security frameworks. While one country acted alone at first, cooperation slowly took form through separate but linked efforts. From sudden meetings emerged a pattern of mutual support, though each state maintained its own approach. What started as isolated responses gradually turned into something more structured, yet never fully centralized. Agreement came unevenly, shaped by location, resources, and differing threats.

Formed in 2014, the G5 Sahel unites Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger through a shared security initiative. Its Joint Force operates across borders, aiming to stabilize contested areas. Funding shortfalls have weakened its reach, despite ongoing support from the European Union. Equipment gaps remain widespread, limiting operational capacity over time.

Arising from regional cooperation, the African Union alongside ECOWAS once shaped democratic norms across the continent. With firm measures came consequences - economic penalties followed coups, membership paused for offending nations. Yet such responses did not always bring intended results; hardship fell on ordinary people instead. In turn, some military-led governments chose withdrawal, aligning later with the Alliance of Sahel States. Decisions made long ago now reveal unintended paths taken.

10.4. The Development and Humanitarian Response

It became clear to global allies that relying solely on military measures would not suffice, which brought about the formation of the Sahel Alliance - an initiative designed for coordinating donor efforts across nations.

Though more than a thousand initiatives worth several billion euros began with goals like stronger institutions, local power sharing, or jobs for young people, numerous efforts stopped when armed threats kept humanitarian staff away from high-risk areas.

Alongside hunger relief efforts, groups such as the World Food Programme and Médecins Sans Frontières address widespread undernourishment affecting vast populations. Despite these attempts, access continues to decline - military actors and armed factions alike limiting passage. Movement once possible now meets increasing barriers, reducing aid impact. Where

support reached before, constraints today block consistent delivery. Silent suffering grows, even as organizations persist amid tightening conditions.

10.5. The Entry of "Alternative" Security Partners

Now emerging within prior moves is a conscious spread of defense alliances among nations in the Sahel region. Different ties take shape as trust shifts toward multiple external forces instead of reliance on one. Decisions unfold slowly, shaped by changing regional pressures rather than sudden impulses. What once leaned heavily on familiar arrangements now tests new alignments across borders. A pattern forms - not through force but quiet recalibration over time.

Beginning in 2021, Mali shifted its reliance from Western support to Russia; Burkina Faso followed soon after. Security cooperation emerged through ties with the Wagner Group, subsequently restructured into what is now known as the Africa Corps. Absent from such partnerships are requirements tied to human rights disclosures or governance standards typical of UN and EU operations. Military-led governments found this flexibility favorable. Questions about protection of non-combatants have grown among global observers. Despite differences in approach, outcomes remain closely watched.

For ten years, European Union efforts focused on instructing Mali's armed forces. Despite such support, numerous graduates later played roles in overthrowing governments. As a result, confidence in external instruction weakened. Suspension followed, bringing reconsideration of long-held assumptions about skill transfer abroad.

11. Affiliated Actors

11.1. States and Governmental Organizations

At the governmental level, there has been involvement from both regional actors and international actors. The African Union(AU) has been active in the promotion of peace and security through joint African reactions to conflict and the authorization of operations whose main aim is the stabilization of conflict areas. The Economic Community of West African States has also been involved in diplomatic efforts such as sanctions and encouraging political change in nations such as Mali and Burkina Faso following coups.

The G5 Sahel Joint Force was established by Sahel countries with the intent of carrying out joint cross-border military operations against terrorists and criminals. Despite being actively involved in joint patrols and military operations, the organization faces challenges stemming from funding insufficiencies and the lack of military equipment.

The UN has made important contributions through peacekeeping and stabilization efforts with the deployment of the Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée des Nations Unies au Mali (MINUSMA). Although it has received some criticism and faces certain limitations in its operations, its presence in Mali has changed over time.

External states have also made crucial interventions in the form of military operations by France, most notably Operation Barkhane with the intent of conducting counterterrorism operations against terrorist groups in the Sahel. The USA has also had a hand in this mission via intel sharing, helping with the training of local forces and aiding counterterrorist

activities. Meanwhile Russia has also been involved by providing security support and deploying special military forces into certain areas.

11.2. Non-Governmental Organizations and UN Bodies

Among non-governmental organizations and UN bodies that are associated with this crisis, it is important to point out the humanitarian and development programs implemented there. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross is known for providing medical aid for people suffering from conflicts. It included provision of medical help and aid for the displaced population, which sometimes happened in the conflict zones. Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) provided health care in dangerous territories in order to cope with injuries caused by conflict and general public health problems. Finally, the World Food Programme worked on fighting food shortages caused by war and drought and supplied aid to about ten million people.

UN bodies were responsible for providing a humanitarian response on a larger scale. Thus, the UN was engaged in food aid, refugees' assistance, and peacekeeping in the region. However, the organization involved in this activity did not limit its actions only to direct assistance to victims but also organized funding from all over the world and facilitated the cooperation of other interested parties.

Speaking of the most powerful non-state actors, one should name groups engaged in violence in the region. Boko Haram conducted various attacks and kidnappings, including those across borders, especially near Nigeria. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) has been involved in extensive attacks against civilian and military personnel and has expanded its operations in some regions of Mali and Niger. Finally, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, which works with Al-Qaeda, has organized coordinated attacks in order to enhance its influence.

12. Domestic Approach

Mali: Mali has mostly depended on military action in an attempt to take control back of the areas where armed terrorist groups reside. On paper, this type of response should have helped protect civilians, weaken the armed groups in question and restore the authority back to the government. In reality, however, the operations executed by Mali were only partially useful. The main problem stemmed from the fact that Mali's security policy was disconnected from stronger governance, public services or local approval. Mali's early response can be described as "too limited" and "weak", especially in the north and center of the country where the government had long been absent. Relentless coups and political instability makes it a great deal harder for the government to build trust, especially in those regions. This resulted in some short term problems to be solved, but not the deeper, root causes of the crisis.

Niger: Niger's response is seen as one of the more balanced cases in the Sahel. Niger tried combining security operations with development policies and state-building efforts. Instead of relying only on the army, Niger also tried to improve infrastructure, expand public services, and strengthen government presence in vulnerable regions. This made its response more useful than approaches that focused only on military force and getting rid of armed forces. In many ways, Niger's strategy was more realistic because it recognized that the crisis was not only about terrorism, but also about poverty, weak institutions, and lack of opportunity. For that reason, Niger's operations were relatively more effective than those of

some of its neighbors. Still, the country was not fully successful. Insecurity continued, and political instability later weakened confidence in the system. This means Niger's model was useful, but that it was incomplete.

Burkina Faso: Burkina Faso reacted to the crisis with immediate counterterrorism operations and a stronger military presence as violence spread quickly across the country. Compared with Mali, Burkina Faso acted faster and showed more urgency, but their response still had serious limitations. The government relied heavily on emergency security measures and local defense groups to defend communities and push back armed terrorist organizations/groups. These operations sometimes helped in the short term, especially in protecting certain areas and showing that the state was still active. However, they did not stop the overall spread of violence. In many places, attacks continued and displacement increased. This shows that Burkina Faso's approach was only partly effective, much like with Mali. Its operations were useful as an immediate reaction, but they were not enough to create lasting peace. The deeper problems of poverty, weak local government, limited education, and poor access to basic services were still there, so extremist groups were still able to take advantage of the situation.

France: France has responded to the crisis in the form of multiple operations. The first was Operation Serval which was launched following an emergency appeal from Mali. French air and ground forces were successful in stopping militants who had links with Al Qaeda from reaching the capital, Bamako. The local government regained authority in important cities such as Timbuktu and Gao. Following the success of Operation Serval, Operation Barkhane was launched as a follow up, expanding the mission into a region-wide counterterrorism operation based in N'Djamena, Chad. On the other hand, they established permanent military bases in Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad. Despite their efforts, reliance on only them by the Sahel countries like Mali Burkina Faso and Niger led to serious territorial losses which led to the event known as "The Coup Belt" or "Coup Contagion" which describes a series of coups across multiple countries in the Sahel region caused by extremist groups.

The United States of America: The US generally avoided military operations, instead launching logistics operations such as Operation Juniper Micron which provided critical intelligence and establishing a logistics/surveillance base in Agadez which not only helped support security, but by also working directly with the already deployed French Military, they were able to further assist the ensurance of safety in the Sahel. Additionally, they provided humanitarian aid for the people that were sick, injured or uneducated because of the ongoing conflict.

The United Kingdom: The UK helped the cause in multiple ways. The first one being the deployment of their military troops in Mali to help with the UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA. However, they withdrew their troops after multiple coups and political instability following Coup Contagion. On the other hand, they're one of the biggest donors donating millions of dollars through the UK-Sahel region development partnership.

China:

Russia:

13. Possible Solutions

Despite rising temperatures across the region, armed interventions alone cannot resolve deep-rooted instability. Where governments weaken, progress often stalls unless safety, public systems, and survival needs evolve together. Still, lasting calm remains unlikely without coordinated effort.

13.1. Strengthening Regional Security Architectures and Native Intelligence

Alone, military strength has not brought lasting results - mainly because cooperation on the ground remains weak while authority structures stay absent. What persists is an absence of unified direction where enforcement operates without civic roots. Where power acts solo, outcomes tend to fade fast. Without shared effort locally, even strong actions collapse quietly. Authority gaps leave space filled by confusion rather than order. Lasting change rarely follows when weapons lead without guidance nearby.

A fresh approach to regional collaboration begins with delegates examining a revised security structure. Instead of isolated efforts, coordination could link the Alliance of Sahel States and ECOWAS through shared mechanisms. Intelligence exchange procedures would form one core element. Border monitoring activities might operate in alignment under such an arrangement. Movement of weapons and fighters may face greater obstacles when responses are timed together. Possibilities emerge when trust is built through consistent operational contact. Structure shapes behavior more than intent does.

Where community-based defense emerges, accountability tends to weaken. Though such forces sometimes respond to gaps in public safety, outcomes include heightened conflict between ethnic or tribal groups. Oversight by central authorities could reduce abuse when integration occurs. Training aligned with international standards might shift behavior toward restraint. Protection of civilians becomes more likely if command structures report beyond village boundaries. Formal inclusion within legal frameworks changes incentives across levels.

For those caught in cycles of militant involvement, leaving becomes possible when practical paths exist. Instead of punishment alone, some governments provide skills workshops alongside counseling services. When survival drives youth toward armed factions, alternatives focused on stability show promise. Support systems that address hunger and joblessness reduce reliance on violent networks. Transition initiatives work best if they combine education access with mental health resources. Without opportunities, returning to normal life remains difficult for many former fighters.

13.2. The Climate-Security Nexus: Environmental Restoration

Faster warming across the Sahel - rising one and a half times beyond worldwide levels - links closely to growing unrest. Where land weakens under heat, tension often follows.

One goal of the Great Green Wall is to bring back life to 100 million hectares once damaged by erosion. Support from nations around the world could strengthen its progress, though focus remains on rebuilding soil where crops grow and animals move. Instead of only targeting climate metrics, attention shifts toward people who depend on the earth each season.

Where conflict arises over resources, peace-focused groups at community level may ease tensions between mobile livestock keepers and settled crop growers. Oversight bodies,

formed locally, could guide decisions on shared land use. With satellite insights into drying patterns, shifts in pasture access might follow more balanced timelines. Fair rotation practices emerge when forecasting tools inform collective choices.

Eighty percent rely on farming for survival, a livelihood shaken by climate shifts. Drought-tolerant crops offer one path forward when rains fail without warning. Irrigation methods that conserve water matter just as much under long dry spells. Economic strain weakens communities slowly, quietly opening space for radical movements to step in. Stability grows where fields remain productive despite changing conditions.

13.3. Restoring Governance and Rebuilding Social Contracts

From distrust in government bodies emerged what became known as the "Coups Contagion." Though unseen at first, erosion of confidence paved the way. Where belief faded, instability followed closely behind. Not force, but weakened trust triggered the spread. One collapse made others feel possible, then probable. What began quietly intensified without warning. Institutional failure acted less like a cause - more like fuel already present.

Out in distant regions labeled red zones, central authorities find it necessary to extend health care, schooling, and safe water access far past urban centers. Where government infrastructure appears - like a classroom or medical post - it quietly challenges extremist messaging. Instead of staying confined to capitals, state functions need reach. A building serving citizens can shift perceptions more than speeches ever might.

For Sahelian nations, restoring confidence at home and abroad begins with strict oversight in defense and mineral industries. Where corruption once thrived, clear systems now need placement. Gold revenues should reach communities, not armed groups - this shift supports steadier economies. Without such change, progress remains fragile.

A shift toward civilian rule ought to unfold without haste, yet include broad participation. Involvement of elders from long-standing communities, associations led by women, together with voices chosen by younger generations, forms a foundation. Such engagement helps align governance with the varied realities across Sahel populations.

13.4. Humanitarian Resilience and Education Protection

Across regions, displacement affects millions while school closures reach into the thousands. A generation at risk emerges quietly under these conditions. Not every consequence appears immediately; some unfold slowly through missed lessons and broken routines. The scale grows without loud announcements - just empty classrooms and interrupted lives. What remains unseen often matters most.

Safe routes for aid depend on talks between armies and armed groups. Agreement could stop food shortages in key cities now under siege. Progress might come through negotiations that set clear access terms. Ending blockades may follow if trust builds slowly over time. Movement of supplies often hinges on mutual, though limited, understandings. Outcomes remain uncertain even when both sides show willingness.

Where safety is compromised, schools can become protected environments. Mobile classrooms might deliver lessons beyond front lines. Learning spaces may shift toward more

stable locations known as hubs. Education continues even during unrest when such measures are applied.

Hidden economies thrive when illicit flows go unchecked. Cooperation across borders becomes essential to trace funds tied to smuggled minerals and weapons trade. Freezing such assets disrupts support networks quietly. Customs bodies within regions gain importance as their capabilities grow. Limiting movement at frontiers weakens militant financing gradually. Enforcement, steady but unseen, shifts momentum over time.

14. Questions to be Answered

1. How can the United Nations reinforce regional security in the Sahel Region?
2. Which measures can be taken to stop terrorist and extremist groups in the Sahel Region?
3. What actions can be executed to strengthen regional governance, prevent further coups and reduce corruption in the Sahel?
4. How can international and regional organizations be of help for the ongoing humanitarian crisis?
5. What protection can be placed on civilians and students to prevent displacement, malnutrition and lack of education?
6. What type of humanitarian aid can be provided to the Sahel region for those who have been injured or affected by the crisis?
7. How can international peacekeeping missions be improved to ensure longer-term stability in the Sahel Region?

15. Further Reading and Bibliography

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