

Joint Press Statement

Task Force Takuba: Second Ministerial Meeting

April 7, 2021.

1. The Ministers of Defence and representatives from Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Mali, Niger, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine participated in the second Task Force Takuba ministerial meeting on April 7, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held remotely.
2. A year after the political launching of the Task Force (March 27, 2020), this meeting was the occasion for the operational partners, and nations who have shown interest in joining Takuba, to assess the follow-up of N'Djamena Summit and the Sahel Coalition progresses, to share a general overview of the consolidation of the Task Force Takuba initial lessons learned and to plan the operational outlook for the coming years. It was also the opportunity for Ministers and representatives of the Czech Republic, Belgium, Estonia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden to formalize the signature of a Framework Technical Arrangement in support of the Task Force.
3. In parallel to the efforts already being done by several European countries through their participation to MINUSMA, EUTM Mali, operation Barkhane and other initiatives, Task Force Takuba demonstrates the commitment and strong determination of European countries to take greater responsibility to contribute to peace and stability in the Sahel region alongside forces of the G5 Sahel countries. Composed of Special Forces of European countries, Task Force Takuba's core objective is to improve the skills and capacity of Malian military personnel in ensuring the security of Malians and Mali. These efforts are complementary to the other pillars of the Coalition for Sahel linked to the capacity building and development and should lead to the "political and civilian surge" called for in the N'Djamena summit.
4. Since July 15, 2020, and the announcement of the Initial Operational Capability (IOC) of the Task Force, more than a dozen successful operations have been conducted together with the Malian Armed Forces and the results are very encouraging. The French-Estonian and the French-Czech Task Groups are successfully deployed in Gao and Ménaka. The Swedish helicopters and Quick Reaction Force has also arrived in Ménaka and the Italian contingent will be fully operational in autumn 2021. Military officers from Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands and Portugal are or will be present in the Operational Headquarters and will among others facilitate the coordination of the Task Force with other operations. Full Operational Capability (FOC) was declared during the visit of the Ministers of Czech Republic, Estonia and France to Mali on April 1.
5. Although major operational successes have been achieved in 2020, thanks to the combined efforts of the national forces, forces of the G5 Sahel countries, the Task Force Takuba and the operation Barkhane in the three borders area in Mali against terrorist armed groups affiliated to Al Qaeda and Daesh, the security situation remains fragile. Armed terrorist groups continue to threaten the stability of the region, and beyond, the security of Europe. During the N'Djamena Summit, held on February 15, the G5 Sahel Heads of State welcomed the increased military engagement of European partners in the Sahel through the launch of the Task Force Takuba. They also reaffirmed,

together with their international and European partners, their shared determination to maintain the efforts to fight together against terrorist groups in the Sahel-Sahara Strip.

6. Therefore, the participation of Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain and Ukraine to this second ministerial meeting and their current interest in the Task Force is welcome. Strengthened security enables conditions for the development efforts in the region, improved governance and the rule of law and human rights, which in turn are necessary to achieve sustainable peace.