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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

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Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/75/50.



I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 74/77, commended the Mediterranean countries for their efforts in meeting common challenges through coordinated overall responses, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity.
2. The General Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society.
3. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-fifth session on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.
4. In this connection, notes verbales dated 23 January 2020 and 4 May 2020 were sent to all Member States, requesting their views on the subject. To date, replies from the Governments of Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Greece and Turkmenistan have been received and are reproduced in section II below. A reply from the European Union has been received and is reproduced in section III below. Any replies received after 31 May 2020 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs (www.un.org/disarmament) in the original language received. No addenda will be issued.

II. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[5 May 2020]

Faithful to its principles and mindful of the security and cooperation challenges in the Mediterranean region, Algeria has consistently called for the promotion and application of the principles of cooperation, friendship, good neighbourliness and mutual respect in the Mediterranean region, to which it attaches great importance in its foreign policy.

With this in mind, Algeria has undertaken and supported several initiatives, including those described below.

I. Partnerships developed in the Mediterranean region

1. 5+5 Dialogue

Since joining this forum, Algeria has been working to promote constructive dialogue reflecting the growing awareness among member countries of the peace and security challenges in the region, which clearly require a holistic and united approach.

The meetings held within this framework have resulted in the adoption of practical cooperation measures in areas related to maritime, air and ground surveillance. For example, important recommendations were approved at the fifteenth

meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 5+5 Dialogue, held in Valletta (Malta) in January 2019 and co-chaired by Algeria and Malta.

2. 5+5 Defence Initiative

This initiative is aimed at strengthening security and stability in the Western Mediterranean in areas such as maritime security, air safety and the contribution of armed forces to the management of major disasters.

Algeria is particularly active in this forum, having organized 60 activities between 2005 and 2019, including maritime surveillance, marine pollution control and air safety exercises and seminars on maritime security. Furthermore, Algeria carried out the first academic study in the field of defence on containing illegal immigration in the 5+5 region and combating related criminal threats.

3. Mediterranean Dialogue of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

In March 2000, Algeria joined the Mediterranean Dialogue of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in order to contribute to the implementation of collective security in the Mediterranean on the basis of a comprehensive approach that complements other Euro-Mediterranean regional security initiatives. Within this framework, a second individual partnership and cooperation programme was signed on 9 July 2018.

4. High-level strategic dialogue on regional security and counter-terrorism

Algeria and the European Union launched a high-level strategic dialogue on regional security and counter-terrorism. The first session was held in Brussels in October 2017 and the second in Algiers on 12 November 2018.

Under their Association Agreement, Algeria and the European Union established a subcommittee for political dialogue, security and human rights, which meets once a year, alternating between Algiers and Brussels, to discuss and work together on regional security issues of common interest. The two parties also adopted, in March 2017, five common partnership priorities, including one related to security.

5. Mediterranean dialogue of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

As a Mediterranean Partner, Algeria participates actively in the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the Mediterranean region, including efforts to combat terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization and transnational organized crime, migration-related activities and work to address trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

6. Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centre of Excellence for the North Africa and the Sahel region

The European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative is aimed at promoting and strengthening cooperation to manage and reduce the risks arising from the use of nuclear, radiological, biological and chemical materials.

Since its inauguration in Algiers, in December 2015, the North Africa and the Sahel Regional Secretariat of the Centres of Excellence Initiative has launched several cooperation projects in this area. The most recent projects concerned cooperation in the detection of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials at border posts, the land transport of chemical and biological products, and chemical and biological waste management. In recognition of its efforts, in 2019 the Regional Secretariat received the prize for the best “success story”, which is awarded

by the European partner to the North Africa and the Sahel region. Led by Algeria, the North Africa and the Sahel Regional Secretariat covers the following countries: Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Morocco, the Niger and Tunisia. It will soon welcome Chad as a new member.

7. “CyberSouth” regional cybercrime project with the Mediterranean countries

Given the implications of cybercrime for security in the Mediterranean, Algeria is developing a joint project with the European Union and the Council of Europe, “CyberSouth”, with the aim of building capacity with respect to cybercrime and electronic evidence in the neighbouring region.

8. Regional cooperation on arms export control

Together with the countries of North Africa, Algeria is participating in arms export control activities initiated by the European Union with the aim of promoting regional dialogue on arms export control.

9. Cooperation with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training

Cooperation is being developed between Algeria and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training in all areas related to emerging crimes, in particular cyberthreats, the collection and analysis of criminal data, and the fight against terrorism and related crimes.

II. Initiatives launched on the African continent

1. Efforts by Algeria to combat terrorism in the Sahel

Since 2007, Algeria has initiated and established effective regional cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism in the Sahel region. This initiative encompasses the military strategic and operational framework, as well as the launch of economic and social development programmes for the inhabitants of the regions concerned.

Several high-level meetings have been held to discuss and identify the measures needed to combat terrorist activities and related scourges in the region. A series of meetings of the chiefs of staff of the armed forces and security services of the countries of the region has also been held with a view to the implementation of practical and viable measures to ensure coordination among the security forces of the countries concerned.

In addition, this cooperation has made it possible to set up training programmes for security officials and customs services, which have been delivered by Algeria for the benefit of the countries of the region. Lastly, the experience of Algeria in deradicalization serves as a clear example of how to successfully neutralize terrorism. One measure introduced by Algeria in this regard was the establishment of the association of imams and preachers from the Sahelo-Saharan region, which is aimed at promoting the true values of Islam and quashing extremism through dialogue and education.

2. African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism

The African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism, an African Union body based in Algiers, plays an important role in preventing and combating terrorism and related phenomena, such as illicit trafficking in light arms and small weapons. Considered a key operational body whose work forms part of a comprehensive and integrated approach, the Centre reflects the firm will of African States to join forces with the international community to take concrete, urgent and collective action to

curb terrorism, in particular through the consolidation of data and research on terrorism.

3. African Police Cooperation Organization

Established in 2016 and based in Algiers, the African Police Cooperation Organization is a regional cooperation tool intended to strengthen security and peace in Africa through a harmonized African strategy for combating crime.

The goal of this mechanism is to develop and strengthen the capacities of African police forces, including through targeted training programmes for police forensic officers tailored to African contexts. It is also aimed at building African capacities in strengthening and coordinating police forces deployed in connection with peacekeeping operations. In that regard, the third general assembly of the Organization, held in Algiers on 2 October 2019, enabled the chiefs of African police forces to discuss substantive and organizational matters and to share their opinions on and experiences in preventing and combating various forms of transnational organized crime.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

[Original: English]
[29 May 2020]

In the context of globalization, the construction of a joint action system, action or reaction can be realized by several countries at the regional level or in a wider aspect. Given the characteristics of this region, urgent action is needed in all aspects essential for strengthening security and cooperation between the Mediterranean countries. The Mediterranean is the most crucial geostrategic space and is a specific set of Mediterranean countries with different socioeconomic, geographical, political, military and religious characteristics, but also diverse historical heritage, which to this day reflects the overall international relations and interests of major world powers in engaging with this region and gaining political, military and economic influence.

The security situation in the Mediterranean region is affected by global security challenges, namely the existence of several hotspots of war, which represent a possible generator of further crises and threats to peace and stability in the Mediterranean. There are also challenges related to various forms of organized crime and corruption, as well as security challenges and threats related to cyberspace, the return of foreign fighters, national and religious intolerance, political and economic instability and illegal trade in small arms and light weapons. Conflict prevention is a crucial measure in approaching and addressing security challenges, risks and threats. Terrorism as the world's most significant security phenomenon remains a pronounced security threat. In close interaction with terrorism, one of the potential threats concerns returnees from foreign battlefields, primarily those from the Middle East. Security services estimate that most have joined Islamic State extremists or other extremist and terrorist groups. This security challenge requires that the countries of the Mediterranean region toughen the penalties for those going to foreign battlefields. In addition, security challenges such as cyberterrorism should not be ignored, as the response thereto requires the cooperation of the countries of the Mediterranean to prevent cyberattacks or any other disturbances in this domain.

In view of the above-mentioned security challenges, threats and risks, which will certainly, owing to the geostrategic position of the Mediterranean region, continue to have an impact on the security of the region, the conclusions set out below are drawn.

To strengthen security and the effective prevention of and adequate response to these security challenges, threats and risks, the countries of the Mediterranean region should continue activities to take proper measures to strengthen the security of states and citizens. No country in the Mediterranean region can respond to these security challenges, risks and threats on its own. Therefore, strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation is very important.

Taking into account the current situation in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we propose that paragraph 8 be extended to include the need to strengthen cooperation between States for joint action in the field of the response to natural and other disasters.

Cyprus

[Original: English]
[29 May 2020]

The stability of the Mediterranean region is a priority for the Republic of Cyprus, and as a matter of policy Cyprus seeks to cooperate with all willing partners who share this historical crossroads in order to ensure that security is achieved. The immediate focus of Cypriot priorities is, naturally, the Eastern Mediterranean. Good neighbourly relations, respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the rule of law are the fundamental principles that underpin the policy of Cyprus in its neighbourhood. This principled stance has not always been welcomed or reciprocated by all our neighbours, a fact reflected in the compromised sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus, the result of actions by one specific neighbour, in clear violation of international law and the Charter.

In promoting the objective of long-lasting stability, Cyprus has advanced a policy of establishing, jointly with Greece, trilateral mechanisms of cooperation with its neighbours in the Eastern Mediterranean. These interactions have begun to have tangible results across a broad spectrum of cooperation, including energy, counter-terrorism, environmental issues, cybertechnology and innovation, education and many more. These mechanisms have proven resilient and flexible, and have attracted strong interest from near and far, with partners including France, Italy, the United States, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates now participating in some of these collaborations on an ad hoc basis.

Recognizing the significance of energy for many of its regional partners, Cyprus has also concluded bilateral agreements with its neighbours in order to delineate its exclusive economic zone in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Such agreements were signed with Egypt, Israel and Lebanon, and these have proved essential in structuring a rules-based nexus of peaceful cooperation. Regrettably, not all countries in the region respect international law and the sovereign rights of their neighbours, and instead choose to pursue policies of force to the detriment of all in the region.

A major issue of concern during the past few years is that of irregular migration, and Cyprus has experienced a significant upsurge in arrivals. Beyond the obvious economic ramifications, this has also raised concerns regarding the movement of terrorists under the guise of bona fide migrants. While Cyprus is committed to assisting those in need, in full respect of its international obligations, countering terrorism has been a central tenet of national security strategy, and Cyprus shares this concern by cooperating closely with its regional, European Union and international partners. We have been involved in training programmes with regional partners, and cooperated with Jordan and Egypt in countering/preventing violent extremism. Moreover, we have been upgrading our capabilities in preventing the proliferation of

chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive materials, as well as in preventing illegal financing and trafficking of such materials.

Greece

[Original: English]
[26 May 2020]

Respect for international law and the principles of good neighbourly relations are of paramount importance for safeguarding and strengthening regional peace and security. Greece has always been committed to the rules of international law and remains a strong advocate of the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, it has always exercised its sovereign rights and jurisdiction in its maritime areas in accordance with the international law of the seas, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, abstaining from activities that could exacerbate tensions and jeopardize the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction that each State has over its maritime zones in accordance with international law, including the Convention.

Turkmenistan

[Original: Russian]
[6 March 2020]

By a resolution, the General Assembly recognized the permanent neutral status of Turkmenistan. On that basis, the Constitutional Act on the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan was issued on 27 December 1995. The permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan proclaimed in this Act is the foundation of its domestic and foreign policy, which is designed to strengthen stability and social harmony and to develop friendly and mutually beneficial relations with States in the region and around the world.

Turkmenistan is underpinned by its peaceful foreign policy, which is a direct consequence of its neutral status and international commitments. Accordingly, all matters are addressed exclusively through political and diplomatic channels, primarily the United Nations and other authoritative international organizations. The foreign policy of Turkmenistan, which is aimed at developing ties with other States and international bodies and at resolving matters conducive to the establishment of a benign and forward-looking world order, has played a constructive role in ensuring regional peace and security, a priority issue for the international community.

The neutral status of Turkmenistan, its foreign policy doctrine of non-affiliation with any blocs and its rejection of the use of force as a means of resolving international disputes predetermine its stance with regard to peace and security.

General Assembly resolution [74/77](#), entitled “Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region”, will focus the efforts of the international community on enhancing peace, security and cooperation among Mediterranean countries; strengthening cooperation in combating terrorism, international crime, illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking; and improving the political, economic and social situation.

III. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]

[31 May 2020]

The strengthening of security and internal regional cooperation in the Mediterranean, as well as in the broader Middle East, remains high on the European agenda.

Cooperation was reinforced through relevant regional organizations, especially through the Union for the Mediterranean, whose strategic importance as a key platform for dialogue and as a mechanism to strengthen regional and social cohesion in the Mediterranean was also reiterated in the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. In 2020, the European Union celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration, in which the bases for the Union for the Mediterranean were laid down. A number of high-level meetings were conducted in pursuit of the European Union's goal of strong engagement with Mediterranean partners with a view to an increasingly effective partnership within the context of the reviewed European Neighbourhood Policy. The European Union continued, in line with the European Neighbourhood Policy review and the 2017 joint communication on a strategic approach to resilience in the European Union's external action, to follow up on concrete measures to reinforce partners' resilience against global challenges and threats, such as supporting the development and growth of the poorest areas, countering the terrorist threat and violent extremism, as well as supporting security sector reform and border management in the context of the rule of law. The Common Foreign and Security Policy missions and operations in the region also play an important role in achieving this goal.

The European Union supports United Nations activities in the region, through funding and technical cooperation. Such cooperation applies specifically to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration.

Where possible, the European Union cooperated with Southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries on political, economic, security and civil society tracks and maintained its position as the region's largest donor and foreign aid provider.

Work on implementing priorities for partnerships has continued, including in the area of counter-terrorism and security, as well as in supporting structural socioeconomic reforms.

The European Union continued to cooperate with the Southern partners on tackling terrorism and preventing radicalization leading to violent extremism. Security and counter-terrorism dialogues have been conducted in the region, leading to concrete results. The work of counter-terrorism and security experts continues in European Union delegations, with the direct support of member States, to contribute to a better situational awareness of local context, deepen engagement with respective authorities and define targeted cooperation programmes. They also act as a reference point for matters related to counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism for local and international counterparts, for example in donor coordination platforms or at Global Counterterrorism Forum meetings.

Migration continues to be a top priority for the European Union and its partners in the region. Work is ongoing to save lives, tackle the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, protect Europe's external borders and further strengthen cooperation with international partners in the Mediterranean region and beyond. The principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility expressed at the summit held in Valetta in November 2015 will continue to guide the response of the European Union and African partners. The latest initiatives in this domain

include the enlargement of Frontex competences within its current form as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. The European Union asylum system has been upgraded with identification databases, such as Eurodac. Surveillance has been enhanced through the European Travel Information and Authorization System, the smart border management system, and the European Border Surveillance System. Cooperation between security forces includes joint exercises such as the 2020 European Union Common Information Sharing Environment and the Early Warning for Increased Situational Awareness project, specifically in maritime and border cooperation, as well as the Marine Earth Observation project, which applies data from the European Earth Observation Programme to maritime security.

A regional initiative covering the two shores that tackles migration is the Rabat Process, in which States members of the European Union cooperate with countries from the Mediterranean basin on migration management, as set out in the Marrakech Action Plan 2018–2020.

The Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations that are active on the main migratory routes are enhancing capacity in the region to address local challenges, including those linked to irregular migration, and contributing ultimately to regional stability. The European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean has contributed to European Union efforts to ensure the return of stability and security in Libya and maritime security in the Central Mediterranean region by disrupting the business model of migrant smugglers and human traffickers, training and monitoring the Libyan coastguard and contributing to the implementation of the United Nations arms embargo. The European Union military operation in the Mediterranean was adopted in 2020 as its successor operation, with the principal duty of executing the arms embargo with respect to Libya in accordance with Security Council resolutions [1970 \(2011\)](#) and [2292 \(2016\)](#), until 31 March 2021.

The European Union expresses concern about the instrumentalization by third parties of migrant pressure along the Eastern Mediterranean migration route, as well as the spread of disinformation and fake news regarding the plight of people using that route. In this respect, it is of the utmost importance to enhance cooperation and partners' ability to address these challenges.

Major financial instruments for funding efforts in the Mediterranean region include the European Union External Investment Plan. It was adopted in September 2017 and inspired by the European Fund for Strategic Investments. It supports investment in African and European neighbourhood countries. Regional funds include the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, which benefits countries in the North of Africa.

The European Union continues to be the largest donor for the response to the Syrian crisis. The European Union supports a sustainable solution for Syrian refugees, which can be based only on their voluntary, safe and dignified return to their places of origin when conditions on the ground as defined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will allow it. To this effect, the European Union has launched the Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (Madad Fund), specifically targeting funding for the Syrian crisis.

European Union support for the Sahel region is critical to stability in the Mediterranean. The European Union has gradually increased support for the region, under the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, Ángel Losada. The fight against terrorism, support for the countries' defence and internal security capabilities, the restoration of the presence of the State in fragile areas, long-term development and the humanitarian response are the European Union's main areas of commitment. Particular support has been awarded to the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) coalition, created in 2014, and its Joint Force, created in 2017. The European Union presence includes Common Security and Defence Policy missions in

the region (European Union Training Mission in Mali, European Union Common Security and Defence Policy mission in Mali and European Union Common Security and Defence Policy mission in the Niger) and the deployment of experts from States members of the European Union. Several conferences have been held since 2017 to increase financial support for the region. On 28 April 2020, a videoconference was held between the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, and the G5 Sahel countries to sustain dialogue on the Coalition for the Sahel, the Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel, and the G5 Sahel integrated strategic framework. An additional €194 million was pledged to support security, stability and resilience in the Sahel.

The European Union has joined the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the African Union to form the Libya Quartet, with the objective of contributing to the efforts of finding a solution to the crisis.

As participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the States members of the European Union continue to foster cooperation and dialogue on wider security issues through the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation programme with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Priority areas in this forum include countering radicalization and terrorism, border security, migration management and non-discrimination.

The European Union stresses the importance of regional peace and stability and respect for: (a) the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction that each State has over its maritime zones in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; and (b) the principle of good neighbourly relations. The European Union stresses that any activities contravening international law and contradicting good neighbourly relations, as well as provocative public statements, are not conducive to easing tensions and creating a positive environment for regional stability.

Political dialogue has been further intensified with regional partners, such as the League of Arab States. Under the European Union-League of Arab States Strategic Dialogue, launched in November 2015, work continued in the joint working groups and at the diplomatic and ministerial levels, building on the first historic European Union-League of Arab States summit, held in 2018. The European Union also seeks to work with the Gulf States in addressing challenges in the region, such as those in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and the Horn of Africa.

The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area funds projects for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the Mediterranean. European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence in the Mediterranean contribute to this task, including those in Morocco and Algeria.

Within States members of the European Union, further initiatives for cooperation must be mentioned as well. This is the case of the South European Union summits, which include France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Malta. These summits started off by tackling a common sensitivity towards migrant influxes, and have gradually enriched their agenda. The most recent summit was held in Valletta on 14 June 2019.

Other initiatives include the 5+5 meetings, which gather countries from the two shores, under specific meetings on defence, special operations and joint exercises called SeaBorder. SeaHorse Mediterranean exercises also gather countries from both shores to share information on maritime surveillance.