

Ministerial conference to coordinate cooperation among the countries of the Sahel-Sahara region

A ministerial conference to coordinate cooperation among the countries of the Sahel-Sahara region took place in Algiers on March 16.

Ministers for Foreign Affairs from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad participated in the meeting.

The conference reviewed the situation prevailing in the region, taking particularly into account the increased terrorist activity and the threat to peace, security and stability in the region posed by the plague of terrorism and its connections to transnational organized crime and various forms of trafficking.

The conference aimed also to enable the participating countries “to examine and take the measures required at the bilateral and regional levels to eradicate this plague, as well as the ways and means to stimulate economic development for the benefit of the populations of the region”.

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci for a "forthright" cooperation in countering terrorism

Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci declared that the virtues of loyalty and "forthright" cooperation, the commitment to the fight against terrorism have to be respected by the countries of the Sahel-Sahara region.

"I believe that the virtues of loyalty and forthright and sincere cooperation, our uncompromising commitment to the fight against terrorism, as well as our duty of solidarity towards the most vulnerable populations, are rules that should be respected," Medelci said at the opening of the Sahel-Sahara ministerial conference.

"Our meeting shows our individual and collective awareness of the importance of the issues put on its agenda, particularly security, peace and development in our region," the minister added.

No development in Sahelo-Saharan region without security, said M. Messahel, Minister Delegate for Maghreb and African Affairs

Minister Delegate for Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel said, that there will be no development in the Sahelo-Saharan region without security.

"To have democracy and development, security issues should be given priority," said M. Messahel.

Speaking at the end of the proceedings of the ministerial conference of the countries of Sahel-Saharan region, Minister Delegate in charge of Maghreb and African Affairs Mr. Abdelkader

Regional Conference in Algiers on Counterterrorism in the Sahel

Messahel declared that the seven countries of the Sahel are “really” adopting a common strategy to combat terrorism.

Mr. Messahel underlined that the meeting was characterized by “frankness, responsibility and determination.”

The minister also explained that the meeting dealt with responsibility “because as States we have a responsibility to combat such phenomena (terrorism and its connections to organized transnational crime and all kinds of trafficking), first in our own countries, then at the bilateral level, and finally at the regional level.”

The meeting was also characterized by determination, Mr. Messahel said, since “the outcome of our meeting in Algiers reflects total consensus, not only on those concerns but also on action.” He also said that “at the political level, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs made an assessment and now are moving to a step that involves all the neighboring countries in a strategy of action.”

In this context, Mr. Messahel explained that consensus was reached on “coordination and action in the face of the threat that hangs over our countries, the threat involving terrorist activities in our neighborhood and our region but also the connections of terrorism to organized crime, drug and human trafficking.”

He noted that the countries of the Sahel share “a common space that has specific aspects, a space concerned with urgent needs in all areas of development.”

In this regard, Mr. Messahel said that the proceedings also dealt with the need to pursue building major road infrastructures, such as the Trans-Sahara Highway project which connects Algiers to Lagos, Nigeria, over a distance of 4,600 km, of which 4,400 km have already been built. He said that the remaining 200 km needed to connect North Africa to West Africa at a cost of \$180 million will be on the agenda of a donors meeting.

The minister also said that Algeria agreed to finance drilling operations for water wells, and building vocational training centers and health centers, namely in northern Mali, Niger, and Chad. He pointed out that Libya also agreed to finance such projects.

Replying to a question relating to statements of support for the meeting issued by the United States and France, Mr. Messahel said that “the seven countries of the Sahel have taken note of that position” and added that any such reaction from major countries “is welcome”.

“Terrorism is a transnational phenomenon and the international community is called on to act within the United Nations and the Security Council to combat this scourge,” he added.

In reply to a question regarding Morocco’s protest for not being invited to attend the conference, Mr. Messahel directed reporters to look at a map where they would notice, he said, that that country is not concerned with this meeting.

In this framework, he noted that others countries, including Guinea and Nigeria, expressed the wish to participate in the meeting but, he said, the format of the meeting was decided by the seven (participating) countries.

In response to a question pertaining to the position adopted by Mauritania with regard to demands of release of terrorists in exchange for the release of two Spanish hostages, the minister said that “when you deal with such issues, there is no room for equivocation”. “Our meeting today was characterized by forthrightness, responsibility and determination, considering that we unequivocally condemned the payment of ransoms and we recalled in resolute terms for the enforcement in full of UN Security Council resolutions,” he affirmed

Algiers will host two meetings involving the Ministers of Interior and the Chiefs of Staff of the Sahel countries

Two meetings involving the Ministers of Interior and the Chiefs of Staff of the seven countries of the Sahel are scheduled to take place in Algiers starting next April, the first involving the ministers of Interior and the second the Chiefs of Staff of the Sahel Countries.

- [Medelci for a "forthright" cooperation in countering terrorism](#)

- [Intervention de Monsieur le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, M. Mourad MEDELICI à la Conférence Ministérielle des pays de la Région Sahélo-Saharienne](#)

- [Communiqué issued by the Ministerial Meeting of the Countries of the Sahel-Sahara Region](#)

- [Algiers will host two meetings involving the Ministers of Interior and the Chiefs of Staff of the Sahel countries, said Mr. Messahel](#)