

Invitation & Programme

Demystifying Russian security engagement in the Sahel: Can Europe fill the emerging security vacuum?

28. February 2023, between 10 AM and 12 AM in the European Parliament

Registration via this [LINK](#) by the 22nd of February
Brussels, Belgium

Background

Currently, Russia is exploiting anti-French and anti-Western sentiments to promote a false narrative of positive intervention in the Sahel region. Moscow is deploying hundreds of Wagner mercenaries and military personnel to Mali, who have worsened the security situation in the region– as the Russian paramilitary group Wagner are frequently accused of committing atrocities against civilians. These developments are fueling jihadist movements and increasing the security vacuum, especially in the tri-border region of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

In its messaging, Russia uses an army of trolls and allied “influencers” to claim that Moscow is aiding African countries with development projects as well as military assistance. Contrary to its messaging, Russia has no development program for the region, and is focusing on short-sighted goals and on countering European/ Western influence. This is a risk for the European Union, as increased instability in the region may lead to increased migrations flows, fuel extremist violence and foster criminal activities such as drug smuggling.

Europe must thus step up its game to counter Russian engagement in the region, at the same time demystifying a vision of the region that is too focused on Russian and Wagner’s presence. In other words, the EU should design a package for citizens in the region that supports democratic governance models, and which cannot be exploited by Russia. The EU should see the stability of the Sahel region as a major challenge that needs to be tackled through a comprehensive approach, combining military engagement with development programs.

In this event, co-organized by the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Sahel Ms Emanuela Claudia Del Re, MEP Željana Zovko (EPP, CR), Vice-Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Multinational Development Policy Dialogue (KAS MDPD), we will discuss how the EU’s comprehensive security engagement in the region should look like.

Programme

Tue. 28. February 2023

- 09:20 h Venue: European Parliament, **conference room Antall 6Q1**
The event will be hold in English language.
- 09:20 h Pick-up at the Place Luxembourg Entrance of the European Parliament for guests who do NOT have a badge ([please see registration section below](#))
- 10.00 h – 10.05
10.05h – 10.15 h Welcome and organizational remarks by **Denis Schrey**, Head of KAS MDPD
Address by Ms. **Željana Zovko**, MEP (EPP, CR)
- 10.15 h – 10.25 h Keynote by H.E. **Emanuela Claudia Del Re**, European Union Special Representative for the Sahel, European External Action Service (EEAS)
- 10.25 h – 10.35 h Russian security engagement in the Sahel: Quo Vadis?
Delina Goxho, Author of recent study "[European aphasia in the Sahel: stabilizing how?](#)"
- 10.35 h – 11.15 h Panel discussion on the future of EU-Sahel relations amidst heightened international tensions with
 - H.E. **Abdellahi Bah Nagi Kebd**, Ambassador of Mauritania to the EU, the OPCW, the Benelux and the Nordic countries
 - **Aude Maio-Coliche**, Director, Strategic Communication and Foresight, EEAS
 - Col. **Dominik Horn**, Special Advisor to the Chairman of the EU Military Committee
 - **Richard Young**, Head of Division, West Africa, EEASModerated by: **Ulf Laessing**, Head of KAS regional office for the Sahel (Bamako, Mali)
- 11.15h – 12.00 h Moderated Q&A with the audience

Registration

Please register using this [LINK](#) by the 22nd of February.
Participants not in possession of a badge to the Parliament will meet at 9:20 AM at the Entrance from Place Luxembourg

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