



## II AASCA MUN

# AU

**Topic A: Counterterrorism and Regional Security in the Sahel**

**Topic B: Managing Food Shortages and Humanitarian Crises**

## *Letter from the Committee Leaders*

Dear delegates, we are so excited to be your chairs this AASCA MUN 2026! We've been working hard to make sure that this committee is fun, enlightening, and fruitful! The African Union committee chairs welcome you, and hope that diplomacy, leadership, and cooperation prevail.

Hello delegates, my name is Antonella Rumman, I'm a junior at the American School of Tegucigalpa, located in Honduras, and I'm very excited to meet you all! I've been debating in MUN for 6 years and have attended many conferences over the years; I enjoy hobbies like playing volleyball for my school, baking, playing video games, and more! I look forward to guiding and listening to all your innovative debates and arguments!

Welcome to AASCA MUN, my name is Ariel Araya and I am a senior in Lincoln School Costa Rica. We are honored to host you and feel free to ask any questions to any of us. I've been doing MUN since 6th grade and thanks to numerous international conferences, I have been blessed to know about a variety of cultures and I can tell you AASCA MUN is one of these conferences. This topic is important to me as one of my dreams is to work for Mamelodi Sundowns in South Africa and knowing about the history of the great continent of Africa is crucial for my development. Moreover, we are expecting delegates to both reach consensus but also generate tension between blocks.

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Hello delegates. My name is Jose Pablo Rojas, I am a freshman at the American International School. I am 16 years old and have participated in 5 MUN conferences so far. All of these conferences had been an incredible experience for me, helping me to grow as a speaker and to understand better global issues. I am very excited to be part of the 2026 year's AASCA MUN and to see all the solutions you bring to the African Union. My hope is that we can have engaging and respectful debates, while also deepening our understanding of this important topic.

As the conference approaches, we truly hope that you enjoy participating in this committee as much as we enjoyed preparing it for you. We hope that you engage in stimulating discussions, form new, international connections, and most importantly, have fun. The chairs for AU envision are very excited to meet you all!!

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# *Introduction*

## *Topic A*

The Sahel has emerged as one of the most unstable regions globally, shaped by persistent terrorism, weak governance, and fragile living conditions. Extremist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS maintain active operations in Mali, Niger, and neighboring states, exploiting widespread poverty and institutional fragility to expand their influence. This dynamic has deepened insecurity across borders and undermined local and regional stability.

International organizations, including the United Nations and the African Union, have deployed peacekeeping missions and humanitarian support, yet these efforts remain insufficient. The vast geography of the Sahel, porous borders, and resource shortages hinder effective coordination and control. As a result, terrorism, illicit trafficking, and organized crime continue to escalate, intensifying fear and instability among affected populations.

Addressing terrorism in the Sahel requires more than military intervention—it demands comprehensive strategies that promote governance reform, sustainable development, and regional cooperation. Both the security and humanitarian dimensions of this crisis underscore the interconnected challenges on the African Union's agenda and highlight the urgent need for multilateral collaboration to achieve lasting stability.



## *Key Terms*

### *Topic A*

**1. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM):** A branch of al-Qaeda based in North Africa, primarily active in the Sahel, involved in insurgency, kidnapping, and terrorism.

**2. African Union (AU):** A continental union consisting of 55 member states in Africa, working on peace and security initiatives across the region, including the Sahel.

**3. Boko Haram:** A militant Islamist terrorist group based in northeastern Nigeria, also active in the Sahel, notorious for insurgency and abductions.

**4. French Military Intervention:** France has led several military interventions in the Sahel, most notably Operation Serval (2013) to combat terrorism and insurgencies in Mali.

**5. G5 Sahel:** A regional cooperation framework consisting of five Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) aimed at coordinating counterterrorism and development efforts.

**6. Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS):** A terrorist group affiliated with the Islamic State (ISIS), active in the Sahel, responsible for a range of violent activities including attacks on military and civilian targets.

**7. Malian Crisis:** A series of political and military conflicts starting in 2012 that involved a rebellion by separatist Tuareg forces and a subsequent Islamist insurgency.

**8. Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF):** A combined military force formed by four countries—Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria—to combat Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region.

**9. Sahelian Drought:** Periodic droughts in the Sahel region that exacerbate food insecurity, destabilize local economies, and fuel conflict and migration.

**10. United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA):** A UN peacekeeping mission deployed in Mali to help stabilize the country following the 2012 crisis, with a focus on counterterrorism, human rights, and peacebuilding.



# *Historical Background*

## *Topic A*

From Senegal in the west to Chad in the east, the Sahel area of Africa has long struggled with issues of political instability, underdevelopment, and poor governance. Long before terrorism became a major concern, these systemic problems created the foundation for regional insecurity. A major turning point was reached in 2011 with the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi and the subsequent collapse of the Libyan state. Increased bloodshed and instability were caused by the flow of Libyan men and weapons into neighboring countries, especially in Mali, where Islamist extremists and Tuareg rebels took advantage of the situation to annex territory in the north.

Insurgency and terrorism flared up in northern Mali in 2012. Much of the territory was taken over by Islamist organizations like the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Ansar Dine, and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This led to Operation Serval, a 2013 military intervention led by France that assisted in regaining the region but did not completely eradicate the Islamist danger. Rather, insurgent organizations adjusted by spreading out and attacking asymmetrically throughout Mali and into neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. These events demonstrated how brittle national borders are and how little power regional administrations have over their sizable, frequently uncontrolled territories.

The Sahelian security environment became even more complex with the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) in the middle of the decade. Violence and rivalry among jihadist groups escalated as IS-affiliated groups, such the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), started to compete with al-Qaeda-affiliated elements. Attacks on civilians, government troops, and international peacekeepers increased during this time. Due to local grievances, poverty, and ethnic tensions, terrorism continued and even increased in some areas despite the presence of multinational forces like the G5 Sahel Joint Force, MINUSMA (the UN peacekeeping mission), and ongoing French military involvement (later changing to Operation Barkhane).

Sahelian counterterrorism efforts have placed a greater emphasis on foreign assistance and regional cooperation, but political events, such as coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger between 2020 and 2023, have delayed progress. These changes in politics have caused tensions in alliances and interfered with the coordination of counterterrorism efforts. Additionally, as anti-Western sentiment has grown, several foreign missions have been withdrawn or scaled back, refocusing attention on regional and Russian options. It is still difficult to strike a balance between military actions, governance reforms, socioeconomic development, and inclusive political dialogue as the area struggles with the growing threat of terrorism and instability.



## *Current Situation*

### *Topic A*

The Sahel region, stretching from Senegal to Sudan, remains one of the most politically and security-challenged areas in Africa. In recent years, terrorism has intensified, with reports suggesting that a significant proportion of global terrorism-related fatalities occur in this region [citation needed]. Groups such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) continue to expand their influence by exploiting weak governance structures, economic hardships, and porous borders. States including Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have experienced recurrent coups, weakening institutional capacity and exposing populations to heightened risks. Violence is increasingly spreading to coastal countries such as Benin and Togo, underscoring the transnational nature of insecurity and its broader implications for the continent.

Security dynamics in the Sahel involve multiple actors with overlapping and sometimes competing mandates. Terrorist groups operate across borders with relative ease, while national governments attempt to reassert control over their territories. Regional organizations, including ECOWAS, the G5 Sahel, and the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), have developed initiatives to address terrorism; however, overlapping objectives and shifting political priorities often impede coordinated action. The African Union has sought to enhance regional coordination through frameworks such as the Nouakchott Process, which promotes

intelligence sharing and joint operations, though trust deficits among member states remain a persistent challenge.

Underlying these security challenges are structural issues of governance, socioeconomic exclusion, and limited access to basic services. Long-standing political instability and weak leadership have eroded public confidence. Heavy-handed military responses can inadvertently exacerbate vulnerabilities, while local populations with limited economic opportunities may be drawn to extremist groups offering structure or income. Security forces often face shortages in resources and capacity, and reductions in foreign support further constrain their effectiveness. The southward spread of violence threatens previously stable areas, risking the reversal of development gains.

Potential policy strategies for consideration include strengthening coordination between the African Union, ECOWAS, and the AES to optimize intelligence sharing, training, and logistical support. Delegates may also explore approaches that combine military action with socioeconomic interventions, such as expanded education, employment opportunities, and community development programs, to provide alternatives to extremist recruitment. Establishing a regional mechanism, such as a Sahel Stabilization Fund, could be considered to provide sustained financing for stabilization initiatives while reducing reliance on external actors. Across all interventions, maintaining a focus on human rights and civilian protection is critical to rebuilding trust between governments and communities.



The African Union is strategically positioned to facilitate regional cohesion and guide a coordinated response to Sahelian insecurity. Delegates should consider how AU-led frameworks can support comprehensive approaches that integrate security, development, and governance objectives. Ultimately, countering terrorism in the Sahel requires more than military measures; it necessitates creating opportunities, fostering trust, and strengthening institutions across the region.

## ***Bloc Positions***

### ***Topic A***

#### **The Core Sahel States Bloc:**

Within the African Union (AU), involvement in Sahel security efforts has highlighted divisions among member states. Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger—forming the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) after a series of military coups—prioritize national sovereignty, control over domestic security forces, and limited external interference, in contrast to Pro-AU members who emphasize multilateral legitimacy and adherence to AU governance norms. Consequently, AES nations have largely distanced themselves from ECOWAS initiatives and faced AU suspension for noncompliance with leadership protocols. Nevertheless, they remain central to addressing displacement, food insecurity, and ongoing conflict, with their cooperation pivotal to regional stabilization. The presence of international partners, including France, the European Union, and UN agencies, further shapes operational dynamics. These differing

priorities and external influences complicate AU consensus, challenging efforts to develop coordinated, region-wide strategies for security and humanitarian response in the Sahel.

### **The Pro AU Bloc:**

On the other side, the Pro-AU group, including Benin, Chad, Mauritania, and Senegal, generally aligns with the African Union's emphasis on humanitarian assistance, good governance, and democratic processes. These nations support AU-led initiatives promoting the rule of law, civilian protection, and the restoration of lawful governance in the Sahel. Many also host refugees and internally displaced persons from conflict-affected areas, making their contributions to regional stability particularly significant. For example, Benin and Mauritania have collaborated with AU and UN agencies to establish humanitarian corridors and support peacekeeping operations, demonstrating a coordinated, law-based approach to addressing security and humanitarian challenges in the region.



## *Guiding Questions*

### *Topic A*

1. How can the African Union, ECOWAS, the G5 Sahel, and member states coordinate more effectively to reduce terrorism across the region?
2. How can countries enhance border security and intelligence sharing to prevent terrorist movement and illicit trafficking?
3. In what ways can governments address the root causes of terrorism, including poverty, lack of education, and unemployment?
4. How can counterterrorism operations be conducted while safeguarding human rights and minimizing harm to civilians?
5. What role should international partners, including France, the EU, and the UN, play in supporting Sahel security efforts?
6. How can local communities and civil society organizations foster trust and resilience to counter extremist ideologies?
7. What short-term and long-term strategies can reduce terrorism while promoting regional stability and peace?
8. How can the African Union strengthen governance, political stability, and multilateral cooperation among member states?

9. What reforms within AU institutions or regional organizations could improve their capacity to respond to security challenges?

10. How can policy approaches balance national sovereignty with regional collaboration in addressing terrorism?

## ***Introduction***

### ***Topic B***

The Sahel is among the most food-insecure regions in the world, leaving millions at risk of hunger and malnutrition. Desertification and climate change have significantly reduced agricultural productivity, while ongoing conflicts prevent families from farming effectively and accessing essential supplies. Children are particularly vulnerable, facing malnutrition and disrupted education, which further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis each year.

Organizations such as the World Food Programme and the International Red Cross have provided emergency assistance, yet efforts are often constrained by funding shortages and the difficulties of delivering aid in insecure areas. Large-scale initiatives like the Great Green Wall offer long-term solutions by restoring degraded land and creating employment opportunities, but progress remains slow compared with the rapidly growing needs.



Addressing food insecurity in the Sahel requires integrating immediate humanitarian aid with sustainable development strategies, including resilient agricultural practices and strengthened regional cooperation. This crisis underscores the importance of multilateral solutions, as coordinated action by African Union members and international partners is essential to build long-term stability and prevent future humanitarian emergencies.

## *Key Terms*

### *Topic B*

**1. Acute Malnutrition:** A severe form of malnutrition that occurs when an individual is not getting enough nutrients, often resulting from food shortages or humanitarian crises.

**2. Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA):** A U.S. government agency that provides funding and support for humanitarian relief efforts worldwide, particularly in response to food insecurity and crises.

**3. Crop Failure:** The collapse of agricultural production due to adverse conditions (e.g., drought, pests, conflict), leading to food shortages and often a humanitarian emergency.

**4. Food Assistance:** Aid provided to populations suffering from food insecurity, including emergency food distributions, cash transfers, and food vouchers.

**5. Food Insecurity:** A condition where people lack regular access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food due to economic, environmental, or social factors.

**6. Famine:** An extreme scarcity of food that results in widespread hunger, malnutrition, and death, typically caused by a combination of factors such as drought, conflict, and economic collapse.

**7. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC):** A humanitarian organization providing emergency assistance, particularly in conflict zones, addressing both food security and other urgent needs in humanitarian crises.

**8. Refugee Crises:** Mass displacement of people, often due to conflict or environmental factors, leading to food shortages and the need for large-scale humanitarian assistance.

**9. Resilience Building:** Strategies and programs designed to strengthen the ability of communities to withstand and recover from shocks such as food crises, conflict, or climate change.

**10. World Food Programme (WFP):** A global humanitarian agency that provides food assistance to communities affected by food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition, especially during emergencies.



# *Historical Background*

## *Topic B*

Because of its harsh climate, environmental degradation, and periodic droughts, the Sahel has long been vulnerable to humanitarian disasters and food insecurity. Reliance on pastoralism and rain-fed agriculture has made countries like Niger, Mali, and Chad especially susceptible to climate variability. Severe droughts in the 1970s and 1980s devastated crops and livestock, causing widespread starvation and displacement, which prompted large-scale international food relief and development support.

In subsequent decades, early warning systems, improved farming techniques, and regional initiatives such as the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) were introduced to manage food shortages. Nevertheless, poverty, rapid population growth, and inadequate infrastructure have perpetuated chronic hunger, with millions affected each year by seasonal lean periods. Even modest gains in agricultural productivity and resilience programming have left many communities, particularly those in conflict-affected or remote areas, on the brink of survival.

Since the 2010s, armed conflict and insecurity have exacerbated food shortages. Extremist violence and intercommunal clashes have caused mass displacement, market disruption, and restricted access to farmland and grazing areas. Humanitarian organizations, including the ICRC, WFP, and other

NGOs, have often had to reduce operations or operate under constant threat, leaving millions of refugees and internally displaced people dependent on food aid.

Climate change has further intensified the crisis, with extreme weather events, desertification, and erratic rainfall reducing water availability and agricultural yields. Political instability and weak governance continue to hinder coordinated responses. Despite efforts like integrated food security programs and the Great Green Wall, long-term solutions remain elusive. Addressing Sahelian food insecurity requires a multisectoral strategy that combines humanitarian aid, development planning, climate adaptation, and conflict resolution—an approach central to the African Union’s ongoing efforts to stabilize and support the region.



## *Current Situation*

### *Topic B*

The Sahel region, encompassing Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania, faces a severe and multifaceted humanitarian crisis. By 2025, more than 31 million people are estimated to require urgent assistance with basic needs [citation needed], including 5.7 million internally displaced persons and 2.4 million refugees [citation needed]. Escalating conflicts, climate shocks, and economic instability have compounded the region's vulnerabilities, resulting in widespread food insecurity, malnutrition, and the disruption of essential services. These factors collectively undermine stability and long-term development.

Armed conflict in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso continues to disrupt livelihoods, displace populations, and impede agricultural production. Climate variability, including prolonged droughts, irregular rainfall, and occasional flooding, further exacerbates resource scarcity. Economic pressures, such as inflation and market disruption, limit access to food and other necessities, while inadequate infrastructure and underfunded health and social services constrain humanitarian response capacity. The result is a complex emergency that requires coordinated, multisectoral interventions.

Regional and international actors have mobilized resources to address these needs. The African Union, through its Peace and Security Council, coordinates responses to humanitarian gaps, while frameworks such as the Nouakchott Process facilitate cross-border

cooperation, including measures to address food insecurity. The World Food Programme and other UN agencies provide emergency nutrition and food support, though funding shortfalls and access challenges continue to limit effectiveness [citation needed]. These dynamics underscore the need for stronger coordination and sustained engagement among stakeholders.

Potential strategies for discussion include enhancing information sharing and operational collaboration among AU member states to improve response speed and effectiveness. Delegates may also consider mechanisms such as a dedicated AU humanitarian fund to provide sustained financing for emergency relief, reducing reliance on ad hoc contributions. Integrating climate adaptation measures, including sustainable agricultural practices, into national and regional planning could help mitigate future food insecurity. Partnerships with international organizations, non-profits, and private-sector actors may also expand resources and technical capacity.

The Sahel crisis presents a complex test that demands both immediate and sustained action. The African Union is well-positioned to facilitate regional coordination and guide comprehensive responses that integrate emergency aid, development initiatives, and climate resilience. Delegates should consider how AU-led frameworks can balance short-term relief with long-term strategies to reduce vulnerability and enhance regional stability.



## *Guiding Questions*

### *Topic B*

1. How can international organizations, governments, and regional bodies ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the most vulnerable populations?
2. What strategies can improve agricultural productivity, water management, and land use to address food insecurity?
3. How can programs combat desertification while supporting the resilience of farming and pastoralist communities?
4. How can countries ensure that remote or conflict-affected areas have consistent access to food, water, and healthcare?
5. What immediate interventions can address urgent food shortages in the Sahel?
6. How can education, technology, and local businesses empower communities to produce food sustainably and achieve long-term self-reliance?
7. How can governance reforms be integrated with humanitarian and development programs to strengthen food security?
8. What role should the African Union and regional organizations play in coordinating responses to climate-related crises?

**9.** How can international funding mechanisms and development initiatives be designed to support long-term resilience in the Sahel?

**10.** How can short-term relief efforts be aligned with long-term climate adaptation and community development strategies?



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