



Foreign & Commonwealth Office

The Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan MP
Minister for Europe and the
Americas
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

1 February 2018

Lord Boswell of Aynho
European Scrutiny Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Dear Tim,

Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2264 of 7 December 2017 on EUCAP Sahel Mali Budget Impact Statement.

I am writing in response to your letter of 18 January 2018 in which you raised concerns about the handling of the above document and asked a number of questions.

It is clear that the scrutiny process was not handled in the correct manner on this occasion. Following consultation, it is apparent that those officials responsible for the preparation of the paperwork did not have a clear understanding of the process and this led to regrettable errors. Arrangements are being put in place to provide further training on the scrutiny process to ensure this does not happen again. I would like to reassure you that future CFSP documents will be drawn to the attention of the Committee in the correct manner.

In response to your five questions.

1. The UK is a strong supporter of EUCAP Sahel Mali. Language skills have, unfortunately, been a barrier to UK participation in the mission. As well as marrying language skills with jobs that would be a good fit for the UK, we are then reliant on UK candidates being successful at interview, which is not always the case. We seek to second people into missions in order that they hold strategic positions which can influence the success of the mission and delivery of its mandate. In the Sahel, we have civilian secondees in other missions i.e. the EU Training Mission and EU Stabilisation mission for Central Mali.

2. On recruitment, while the situation has improved since 2016, there are still some difficulties. The mission now has an international staffing level of 79%. Some of the positions that are vacant are strategic advisor roles, operational CT trainer roles and analyst roles. The mission is actively trying to fill these roles.

3. The last strategic review of the mission took place in October 2016. The next review is due to take place in March/April 2018. I will, of course, write to inform both scrutiny committees of the findings when they are published.

4. EUCAP Sahel Mali are working on priorities agreed with the Malian government. These include key areas such as border management, counter terrorism intervention and intelligence work. These areas of work align well and prioritisation is agreed by the Malian government and EUCAP themselves. The numbers of personnel working on each of these priority areas fluctuates as events on the ground change. It is also worth noting that some areas of work target more than one priority. EUCAP Sahel Mali also supply strategic advice to the Malian internal security forces. The short term impact of the mission is through training, but long term results will be achieved through initiating and implementing frameworks as well as working with other EU instruments. The Malian internal security forces have functioning institutions and are operational throughout the training.

5. There is one third country national in EUCAP Sahel Mali. One of the strategic advisors in the Planning and Evacuation Unit is Swiss. There are no third country nationals in EUTM Mali.

I am writing in similar terms regarding the handling of the scrutiny process in this instance to Sir William Cash MP, Chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on the European Union, and copying this letter to the Clerks of both Committees, Les Saunders at the Department for Exiting the European Union, Adam Nutley, FCO Departmental Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Nicole Mason, FCO Parliamentary Adviser, and Sheila Underwood, FCO Select Committee Liaison Officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Duncan'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

RT HON SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP