Ministers of concerned states in the Sahel region, West Africa and partner countries, high-level officials from the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations as well as representatives of civil society met today to discuss the role of civil society in peace and security in the Sahel. The ministerial roundtable precedes the debates on the Sahel region hosted by the UN Secretary General scheduled to take place at the 68th United Nations General Assembly and adds ideas on strengthening a constructive role of civil society in this context.

The co-chairmen of the ministerial roundtable declare jointly the following:

1. Peace and security are not defined only by the absence of conflict. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through broad, systematic and continued inclusion of all groups of civil society, including formal and informal groups, women and youth.

2. All actors – including local, regional and national governments, international organisations, international development partners, non-governmentals as well as local civil society organisations - must work together to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation. This is a fundamental element in creating the basis for long term development and growth.

3. We commend the efforts of the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union, and other international partners in addressing the challenging situation in the Sahel. We support the work of the United Nations Secretary-General in implementing the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, including a focus on the role and inclusion of all groups of civil society.

Mr. Villy Søvndal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.
Mr. Christian Friis Bach, Minister for Development Cooperation, Denmark.
Mr. Pierre Buyoya, African Union (AU) Special Representative for the Sahel.
Mr. Terje Rød-Larsen, President of the International Peace Institute.
Mr. David Harland, Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.