



IPI MEETING BRIEF

Security and Development in the Sahel-Sahara: Insights from the Niamey Seminar

The impact of the current crisis in the Sahel-Sahara region has wider regional implications for the Maghreb and Gulf of Guinea. Security and development solutions must be sought across all three regions if sustainable peace and stability is to be achieved. This was the main recommendation of a policy forum convened by IPI and the Mauritania-based Centre for Strategies and Security for the Sahel Sahara (Centre 4S) on March 22 in New York. The forum was held to share the substantive results of an international seminar held in Niamey, Niger on February 15 – 16 to discuss the security and development challenges facing the Sahel-Sahara region and review the various strategies being devised to address those challenges.

The key messages were:

1. Any viable strategy for the Sahel-Sahara region must be anchored in a robust, dispassionate analysis of the context, based on the views and experiences of those affected by the conflict.
2. The multifaceted peace and security challenges facing the Sahel region impact the North African countries of the Maghreb, West African states, and the Gulf of Guinea. Virtually all of the issues are cross-border in origin and effect; lasting solutions will only be achieved through dialogue and more effective cooperation across all affected regions and their respective coordination mechanisms.
3. Issues cannot be compartmentalized and dealt with in isolation or in a sequential manner as each is equally critical. Drug trafficking, illegal trade, radicalization, resource allocation, economic development and responsible governance are interlinked. It is impossible to prioritize one over the other. As many of the current and planned international strategies have highlighted, a holistic and comprehensive approach is required to address these challenges.
4. Elections are necessary but not sufficient for gaining, restoring and maintaining legitimacy. Providing basic services to citizens and integrating permanent dialogue as a governance function are equally important.
5. The Niamey seminar provided the opportunity for solutions-driven representatives of women, youth and local private sector associations to recommend innovative security and development strategies that must be taken into account when devising an integrated security and development strategy for the region.
6. A full meeting note and report of the Niamey seminar will be available shortly on IPI's website.

-Fiona Blyth