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**QUNO New York informal oral remarks at the Peacebuilding Commission
2018 Annual Session on “Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace in the Sahel region”**

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Our congratulations to the authors of the new “UN Support Plan for the Sahel.” We were pleased to hear this morning a repeated emphasis on the value of partnership with civil society, both in this discussion today and in the broader work of the PBC.

As we look at the support plan, it is clear that the integration of development, humanitarian action, human rights and peace in the Sahel is critical – only by doing this can we start to address the long-term drivers of peace, and break the cycle of late, ineffective and expensive securitized external interventions. The emphasis this morning on the need to have a single, shared theory of change for external accompaniment for the people of the Sahel is vital, but while moving to consensus and coherence from the top down is important, we also cannot forget the need to build our analysis from the bottom up, to involve affected communities, including women and youth, in our understanding of the drivers and dynamics of the situation.

We have three short points:

- Firstly, alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals is very important, in particular the commitment to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies, but it will be critical to ensure that a focus remains on the many drivers for sustainable peace that are not necessarily emphasized within the SDGs – for example, the word reconciliation barely appears in the 2030 Agenda, yet it is clearly key in this context. And when it comes to the support plan itself, we should not view Priority Two on building peace to be four strategic interventions among many, just a few in a long list. Addressing inclusion and inequality, working towards reconciliation and social cohesion, is not just an add-on, it is essential to the whole enterprise.
- Secondly, investment needs merit their own chapter in the support plan and encouraging and engaging the private sector is emphasized. It is nevertheless vital to find a balanced approach for development and commercial activities, to ensure that investment is designed not only to be conflict sensitive but, at best, to be actively restorative, in ways that directly contribute to sustainable peace – that is, as the G5 speaker noted this morning, it is key for development and commercial actors not only to avoid making things worse, to do no harm, but to be partners in making things better.
- Thirdly, inclusion is acknowledged in the support plan, but in addition to issues of women and youth, important as those are, we recall that the Sahel is a region that includes a rich variety of religious, cultural and ethnic differences. Too often these differences have been exploited in patterns of systematic exclusion and oppression that need to be taken into account if the region is to move towards a more inclusive, peaceful and just future.

Thank you.