

Speech to the plenary by Christine Buchholz, 13 May 2020

### **Federal Government driving the militarisation of the Sahel**

Christine Buchholz (The Left Party): President, Ladies and Gentlemen.

More than seven years ago, the Federal Government sent German soldiers to Mali. Since then, not a single promise relating to the international military mission has been kept.

On the contrary, since then there have been more and more bloody conflicts. The Federal Government is letting the Bundeswehr slide deeper and deeper into a war that will last a long time and cannot be won. This shows you have learnt nothing from the Afghanistan disaster.

(Applause from the Left Party)

Yet the failure to achieve the objectives is not stopping the Federal Government from continuing to expand the military mission in Mali and increase its robustness year after year. This year is no exception: The cost of the German military trainers on the European Training Mission EUTM Mali is more than doubling. The theatre of operations is being expanded sevenfold.

So far it has been confined to half of Mali. Now it is to include the whole of Mali and the national territories of Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad. You are truly losing any sense of what is proportionate when it comes to expanding German military presence on the African continent.

(Applause from the Left Party - Henning Otte [CDU/CSU]: Goodness!)

Together with the French government, the Federal Government is drawing more and more countries into the conflict. EU funds are being used to pay for the G-5 Sahel force, which is to act as a kind of auxiliary force to tackle insurgents. This method is fuelling the conflicts.

Human Rights Watch has reported that a month ago, Burkina Faso soldiers arrested 31 people in the city of Djibo in what they dubbed a counter-terrorist operation and executed them without a trial. And now, with the new mandate, Bundeswehr trainers and advisors are supposed to advise these very troops.

In doing so you are promoting the militarisation of the Sahel. It is madness to believe that a more robust mission can successfully resolve the economic, social and political problems at the root of the conflicts in the Sahel.

(Applause from the Left Party)

And another thing: In its motion, the Federal Government praises the Malian government's "inclusive national dialogue" as it calls it with numerous political forces. Only it fails to mention an important point: in the context of the inclusive dialogue, the Malian President Keita has expressly advocated negotiations with the insurgent troops who have not been involved in the peace process to date.

The most important rebel leader Ag Ghali has also declared his willingness to negotiate, provided international troops are withdrawn. You are not talking about this here. Evidently, it's not about Mali, but rather the Bundeswehr being present in the region. The Left Party says: withdraw the Bundeswehr at last, from Mali and the whole Sahel.

(Applause from the Left Party)