

Brussels, Belgium, 19 December 2014

### **Mobile security threats call for integrated, regional response in the Sahara-Sahel**

The “Sahel” label covers a fluid space that defies classical geographic description and is characterised by the constant movement of people and goods, as well as the instability and violence that has marked recent years. Understanding this mobility and cross-border activity is vital for efforts to stabilise and develop the region.

A new Atlas produced by the Sahel and West Africa Club of the OECD offers a different way of reading the Sahara-Sahel by analysing these transnational and regional flows. The [Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics and Security](#) features 150 maps that chart the complex movements of goods and people and zoom in on migratory movements, terrorist networks and attacks, illegal trafficking routes, as well as regional and international stabilisation efforts.

“Our aim is to show that the Sahara-Sahel is not empty or without hope,” François-Xavier De Donnea, President of the Sahel and West Africa Club, said during the launch of the Atlas in Brussels. “The region is criss-crossed by roads with populations mostly made up of urban dwellers, whose settlements follow the pattern of trade and transit. With the right set-up and co-ordination of commercial and political incentives, the Sahara-Sahel could flourish.”

The Sahara-Sahel’s 17,000 km of borders do not so much hamper activity as drive it. Trafficking in gasoline and food capitalises on variations in exchange rates, taxation levels and national subsidies. Trafficking in black-market cigarettes, illegal drugs and weapons is widespread and developed on a regional scale.

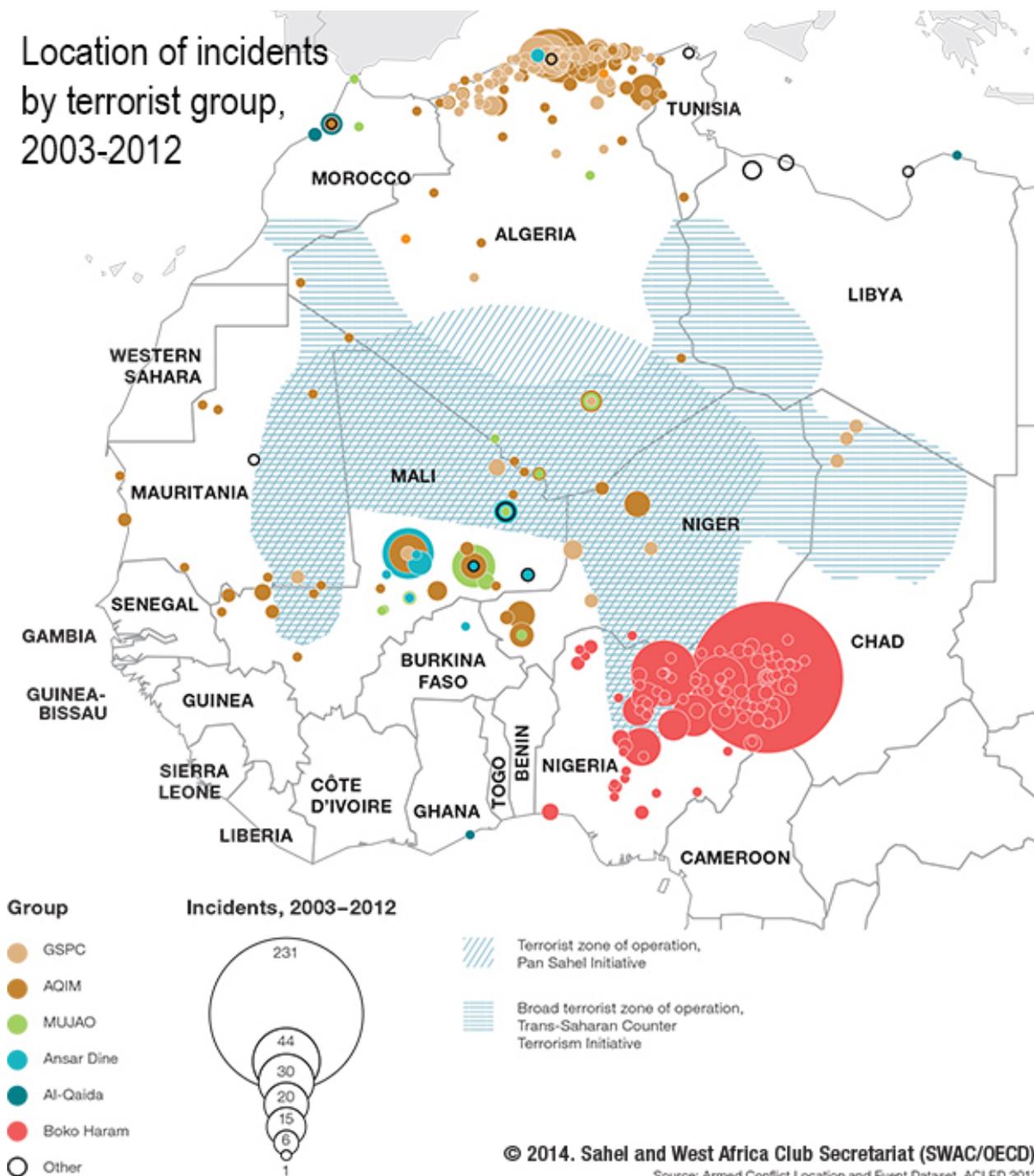
The Atlas illustrates how terrorist groups seek to control strategic border areas or roads more than sections of national territories. Many groups have grafted themselves onto historical social networks, enabling them to strike from a distance. For example, many AQIM leaders operate through the extremely mobile Touareg and Arab tribes in the region.

Structurally fragile Sahelian countries face serious difficulties in controlling their vast territories and countering the development of these harmful elements. Their efforts are supported by a number of regional and international initiatives. A lasting peace must also rely on the co-operation of the different shores of the Sahara, North, Central and West Africa.

“The Sahara-Sahel area is a top priority for Africans in the Sub-Saharan and northern regions, for Europeans and for international partners,” said EU Special representative for the Sahel, Michel Reveyrand de Menthon. “This comprehensive Atlas makes clear the lengthy and complex timeline implicit in resolving the issues affecting the region.”

“Co-ordination of the regional and international players working in the Sahel is key to the success of the different initiatives for this region,” said the UN Special Envoy for the Sahel, Hiroute Guebre Sellassie. “The multitude of actors and interventions do not pose an obstacle but constitute an opportunity, on the condition that this surge in generosity be co-ordinated so as to respond to real needs identified by the states and people of this region.”

## Location of incidents by terrorist group, 2003-2012



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### NOTES TO THE EDITORS

#### The Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC)

The SWAC is the only international platform entirely dedicated to regional issues in West Africa. Its mission is to enhance the effectiveness of regional policies and of partner support. This is achieved by facilitating dialogue, information-sharing and consensus-building; providing independent, factual and forward-looking analysis; devising policy tools and guidelines. SWAC Members include three West African organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS) and seven OECD member countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States).

[www.oecd.org/swac](http://www.oecd.org/swac)

#### Sahara-Sahel

The Atlas focusses its analysis on eight countries of the Sahara-Sahel: Algeria, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia.