

Press conference of Mr. Ahmed Attaf, Minister of Foreign Affairs and national Community Abroad, on the situation in Niger

Algiers, 29-08-2023

**In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful
and prayers and peace be upon His faithful Prophet**

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the national and international media family,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Honorable guests,

1- I would like to thank you very much for accepting the invitation and for attending our meeting today on the serious developments that have occurred in our immediate neighborhood, namely in the Sahel region, in general, and the sisterly Republic of Niger in particular:

- a country considered almost as unique in the region to have anchored the principles of democracy and rule of law following its first successful democratic transfer of power between two elected presidents in the recent years.
- a country that has convinced everyone that it has definitely put an end to the era of military coups, five of which have marked its history.
- a country standing out from its neighborhood thanks to remarkable security and institutional stability.
- and lastly a country which has embarked in paving its way towards development and welfare after previously counting amongst the poorest countries in the world.

2- Unfortunately, the sisterly Niger is back to the nightmare of coups, an era thought to be over and its page definitively folded. Thus the Sisterly Niger is once again facing a new political, constitutional and institutional crisis.

3- Since the very first moment of the crisis, the President of the Republic has defined with clarity, precision and strictness Algeria's position while identifying its foundations as follows:

First, the condemnation and the rejection of the unconstitutional change in Niger, in line with the African Union legal framework that prohibits and rejects the unconstitutional changes of governments;

Second, the call for the return to the constitutional order and for the respect of the democratic institutions in the country;

Third, the confirmation that President Mohamed Bazoum remains the legitimate president of the country and the call for enabling him to resume his duties as the legitimately elected President of Niger;

Fourth, the confirmation of the imperative of prioritizing the political solution while rejecting the use of force given the dire consequences that this option would lead to for Niger and for the entire region;

Fifth and lastly, the reaffirmation of Algeria's readiness and willingness to contribute to the efforts aimed at forging the sought political solution in order to put an end to the crisis in Niger.

4- The main feature of Algeria's position regarding the crisis in Niger is that it combines in a wise and thoughtful manner the rejection of two elements: the unconstitutional change of the government and the use of force to address the crisis resulting from it. Our conviction is deeply anchored in the fact that a middle ground solution can only be reached by providing the necessary conditions to initiate a political process so as to put an end to the crisis, in line with the highest interest of Niger and its brotherly people and the interests of all countries and peoples of the region.

5- Based on this position, and upon direct guidance of the President of the Republic and his constant follow-up, Algeria has initiated contacts and consultations with various actors inside and outside Niger, in order to contribute to appeasing the situation and encourage all to come together around the political solution which is the best option to put an end to the crisis and to obviate Niger and the region from its dangers.

6- These diplomatic contacts include:

First, the phone call I personally had, upon instruction of the President of the Republic, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Niger, on the first day of the military coup, during which I have affirmed to the Minister Algeria's total rejection of the coup and its full solidarity with the legitimate president of the country, Mr. Mohamed Bazoum, whom we demanded to be released and enabled to perform his duties as the legitimate president of the country.

Second, the consultations held by the President of the Republic with the Heads of State of Nigeria and Benin, through the Special Envoy of the President of Nigeria and the phone call he has received from the President of Benin.

Thirdly, the contacts held by our Ambassador in Niamey, upon instruction of the President of the Republic, with several current and former officials in Niger, including, the authors of the military coup, and at the highest level of their leadership.

Fourthly, the discussions I personally held with the State Secretary of the United States of America as well as the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Italy and Canada.

Fifth and lastly, the initiative taken last week by the President of the Republic to dispatch two of his Special Envoys, on the one hand, to Niger, and to three countries that are members of ECOWAS, on the other hand, namely Nigeria, Benin and Ghana.

7- The main objective of these contacts and consultations was to build regional and international momentum around the political option to resolve the crisis in Niger, and to exclude the option of resorting to the use of force. Does African wisdom not believe that: "There has never been a good war or a bad peace"?

8- Our strong opposition to the option of the use of force to address the crisis in Niger lies in the serious, dire and certain repercussions that any military intervention will have on Niger and on the entire region, in addition to the absence of chances for this option to succeed in achieving the desired goals.

9- There is no doubt that our region's history is filled with bitter experiences that have proven, and are still proving, the disastrous effects stemming from military interventions. We have enough lessons in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Somalia to be invoked to draw inspiration for restraint, caution and patience in dealing with the current crisis in Niger.

10- Based on the solidity of these convictions, Algeria has warned its brothers in the region and its partners around the world against the consequences of prioritizing the logic of force over the logic of a political solution, the risk of feeding the seeds of a looming sectarian conflict, the risks of pushing hordes of Nigerians on the path of displacement and migration, and of the imminent threat of creating a new hotbed of conflict in the region that will provide an additional incubator for terrorism and organized crime in all its forms, and an open door to the unknown and the unaccounted for both Niger and the entire region.

11- I can truthfully assure that our reservations, concerns and fears were widely shared, whether by the brotherly countries of the Economic Community of West African States, or by the friendly countries outside the African continent. This is what encouraged us to move ahead on this path and put forward new ideas, which we hope from the bottom of our hearts will facilitate reaching a political solution that preserves the unity, sovereignty, security and stability of Niger and spares us, God forbid, the option of shedding lives and sowing havoc and destruction.

12- It is from this viewpoint, and in light of the consultations and contacts that I referred to earlier, and after making his assessment, the President of the Republic has decided to launch an initiative for a political solution to the crisis in Niger within the framework of a vision that guarantees respect for the principle of the illegality of unconstitutional changes of governments, on the one hand, and enables the rallying of all around a peaceful option away from any military intervention, on the other hand.

13- As a useful contextualization to understand the convictions, purposes and goals behind this initiative, I would like to refer to some of its prerequisites :

Firstly: the President of the Republic would like, through this initiative, to affirm that a political solution to the crisis is possible.

Secondly: the President of the Republic has decided to announce this initiative to the international community for the sake of transparency and in order to mobilize the required supports for it.

Thirdly: the President of the Republic has designed this initiative in a spirit of flexibility and openness so as to allow it to absorb contributions, regardless of their sources, that could enrich it and strengthen its opportunities to garner support.

Fourthly: the President of the Republic has decided to place the settlement of the crisis in Niger in a broader framework, which is the Sahel region.

Fifthly: this proposal is open for consultation with all brothers and partners determined to contribute to the solution of the crisis in Niger.

14- The initiative of the President of the President revolves around the six following axes:

First: Strengthening of the principle of the rejection of the unconstitutional changes of governments. Algeria considers itself as the moral, political and ethical depository of this principle, which was consecrated on its land by the Organization of African Unity summit of 1999. Therefore, during the next African Union summit, Algeria will propose initiatives to strengthen this principle and its implementation in order to put a definitive end to the era of coups d'Etat which have been weakening the stability and impeding the development of many countries on the continent.

Second: Setting a period of six months for the elaboration and implementation of the political solution that guarantying the restoration of the constitutional and democratic order in Niger through the resumption of the political activity in the framework of the rule of law.

Third: Political arrangements to end the crisis. This approach aims at formulating the political arrangements, with the participation and the acceptance of all concerned parties in Niger, without the exclusion of any party. These arrangements will not exceed six months, and will be placed under the supervision of a consensual civilian authority accepted by all the components of the Nigerian political class. They will lead to the restoration of the constitutional order.

Fourth: The guarantees. The political approach advocated by Algeria will be based on the provision of sufficient guarantees to all the parties with a view to ensuring the sustainability of the political solution and its acceptance by all actors evolved in the crisis and its solution.

Fifth: A participatory approach. To set these political arrangements, Algeria will initiate deep contacts and consultations with all concerned and active parties in Niger, in order to contribute and support efforts aiming at politically solving the crisis or to assist endeavors in this direction.

- Internally, towards all the concerned parties in Niger;
- Regionally, with the neighboring countries and the Member States of ECOWAS, in particular Nigeria as the current chair of this organization;
- Internationally, with countries willing to support efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Sixth and lastly: the organization of an International Conference on the Development in the Sahel: Algeria will endeavor to organize an International Conference on the Development in the Sahel region with the aim of promoting a development-based approach and to mobilize the required funding to implement development programs in this region which is badly in need of socio-economic infrastructures, in order to ensure its sustainable stability and security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15- I cannot find a better way of concluding this intervention other than that of quoting another African proverb: "Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force but through persistence."

16- This is how we should approach the crisis in the sisterly Niger: with firm convictions, constant positions, sincere intentions and tireless efforts.

I thank you