1. Panel Members (names and titles)

Session 1:

Moderator: Ms. Diana Ofwona, UNDP Resident Representative in Niger

- **H. E. Ambassador Tetsuya Kimura**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations
- **H. E. Ambassador Rolf Holmboe**, Embassy of Denmark, Mali
- **Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa**, UNDP Assistant Administrator, Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa
- **Mr. Martial Wilfried Bassole**, Director General, Ministry of Economic and Territorial Development, Burkina Faso
- **Mr. Bakary Bengali**, Mopti Regional Director of Social, Economic and Solidarity Development, Mali

Session 2:

Moderator: Dr. Joy Kategekwa, Senior Advisor to the UNDP Director for Africa

- **Mr. Samba Bathily**, Founder/CEO ADS Group, and CEO, Solektra, Mali
- **Ms. Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu**, CEO, Tony Elumelu Foundation, Nigeria
- **Mr. Tidiani Togola**, Founder/CEO, Tuwindi Foundation, Mali
- **Mr. Ousmane Mahamadou**, Youth Leader, Niger

2. Objectives of the side event

The purpose of the side event was to present and discuss local roadmaps for an effective nexus approach for sustainable recovery and to provide an opportunity to:

- Present concrete examples of local approaches to the nexus being applied by the UNDP in partnership with the UN, civil society, private sector, regional and national actors to support recovery and address the root causes of the crises in Central Sahel;
- Discuss the effectiveness of existing humanitarian-development-peace nexus mechanisms in Central Sahel and how they can be replicated / scaled up;
- Address the criticality of innovative partnerships and the private sector in addressing the multi-dimensional crisis of the Central Sahel;
- Reflect on the coordination, sequencing and complementarity of humanitarian, development and peace interventions, including funding, as part of the UN’s crisis response in the region.
3. **Main points raised by each panelist**

In the first session, Japan’s Deputy Permanent Representative, Ambassador Tetsuya Kimura, highlighted his government’s commitment to the nexus. “This deeply resonates with the principles of human security; we reiterate Japan’s unwavering support to the region and underscore the importance of coordinated support to the region through African-led conflict resolution. In this regard, Japan announced the New Approach for Peace and Stability in Africa ‘NAPSA’ during the 7th Tokyo International Conference. NAPSA places human resources development and institution building at the heart of its approach.”

Rolf Holmboe, Danish Ambassador to Mali, recognized the centrality of the nexus to ensuring delivery of impactful change and noted that without synchronized humanitarian, development and peace interventions in a specific area, efforts will not address root causes, will most likely not be sustainable, and will most likely fail to meet objectives.

This need for stronger action was reiterated by UNDP’s Assistant Administrator and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa. She called for reimagining the nexus, working with communities and taking concrete action on prevention, stabilization, transformation and sustainability.

Martial Wilfried Bassole, Director General, Ministry of Economic and Territorial Development of Burkina Faso, argued that there is need for a paradigm shift in the Sahel with better involvement of communities in problem and solution identification, and in implementation of responses, particularly in prevention, conflict management and promotion of social cohesion.

This was echoed by the representative from Mali, Bakary Bengali, Mopti Regional Director of Social, Economic and Solidarity Development, who emphasized the need for durable and transformative solutions, and in particular, investments in self-sufficiency so that the people could take control of their livelihoods.

From the Diffa region in Niger, Governor Issa Lamine noted that “the implementation of humanitarian responses on the ground is not sufficient. We must switch to stabilization and development initiatives in order to ensure that the responses are consistent with the needs expressed by the populations and to encourage the return of displaced populations to their land.”

In the second session, Samba Bathily, founder and CEO of ADS Group and SOLEKTRA, noted that we must invest in sustainable development interventions prioritizing renewable energy and water for agricultural productivity - especially in rural areas. Having led electrification of 175 villages, and provided water points to 1800 villages in Burkina Faso, he emphasized the need for homegrown solutions, trusting Sahelians to lead the way, and moving from aid to empowering communities.

Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu, CEO of Tony Elumelu Foundation said that Africa was the continent with the most promising, resilient and innovative young minds. She argued that investing in economic growth would end conflict and create political stability.

Mali’s Tidiani Togola, CEO of Tuwindi Foundation saw the digital economy as an entry point to accelerate businesses and catalyze youth innovations. He called for enabling environments for jobs, creation of businesses, and invited all to see the opportunity in the crisis, to prepare for a resilient future.

Finally, a youth leader from Diffa in Niger, Ousmane Mahamadou, emphasized that the reasons why many young people join terrorist groups in the Lake Chad Basin are linked either to ignorance, lack
of education, or inability to provide for their families, and that it was now time to support the many projects and entrepreneurial potential that are needed in order to shift this process.

4. **Main points raised during the discussion**

A common message amongst representatives of the three countries was the need to emphasize development support with a focus on empowering people by promoting self-sufficiency and letting locals lead the way.

In addition, the need for continued efforts towards enhanced coordination of actors was strongly emphasized by the national government representatives, with existing frameworks at national, cross-border and sub-regional levels being developed and implemented.

Moreover, the dynamism of a young and resourceful population was also underlined by the panelists, who called for scaling up investments in local entrepreneurship targeting the youth and the women of the region. To do so, education - both general and vocational - must be boosted, access to new technologies must be taken to new levels, and the promotion of local innovations must shift from a reactive crisis response towards proactively investing in the opportunities the Sahel offers.

Harnessing Central Sahel’s abundant flows of renewable energy, in conjunction with innovative digital and mobile technology solutions, has the potential to catalyze economic and social development. While these solutions would help turn the tide in Central Sahel, they simultaneously require investments in security and governance in a nexus approach.

5. **Key messages of the side event**

Four key take-aways emerged from the discussions:

1. All three pillars in the Humanitarian, Development and Peace nexus are equally important. None is stronger or comes before the others, and for the affected populations it is meaningless to distinguish between them. It is only the collective impact of the three pillars and the convergence of its actors that can address the complex and multidimensional crisis being faced in Central Sahel.

2. We cannot expect big changes with small investments. The international community must join national and local authorities, the civil society and the private sector, and go big and bold solutions. We must go big and we must go to scale, in order to activate the transformation needed.

3. We must invest in the youth, which is probably the single most important factor of positive transformation towards sustainable development in the region.

4. We must end violence and all forms of discrimination against women. Women are not represented at the table of governance and peace building yet they constitute a significant part of the required solutions in the Sahel. Going forward, we need to empower and boost the space for women to make sure they are present on the stage.

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