

AFRICA. DIMENSIONS OF A CONTINENT

Monday, 13. Jänner 2014, 7 p.m.

Bruno Kreisky Forum for international Dialogue | Armbrustergasse 15 | 1190 Wien

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THE CRISES IN THE SAHEL REGION AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR EUROPE

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For some time now, the European Union has recognized the Sahel Region as an area where security and development are closely interlinked and where the EU can and should play an important role in bringing these two aspects together. The EU had therefore worked out a 'Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel' and made this by Council decision an official part of European Common Foreign Policy. With the events in Mali, not even one year ago, this strategy took on a special significance and the EU decided, in March 2013, to nominate Michel Reveyrand de Menthon as EU Special Representative for the Sahel Region. The key aspect of his mandate is to contribute to the implementation, coordination and further development of the Unions comprehensive approach to the regional crisis, on the basis of its Strategy, with a view to enhancing the overall coherence and effectiveness of Union activities in the Sahel, in particular in Mali.

Although the Sahel region had designated as its primary focus namely Mali, Mauritania and Niger, it was clear that the regional ramifications would extend to the Maghreb and South and East to the adjacent African countries.

The presentation of M. Reveyrand de Menthon will therefore cover a wider geographical area, and will have a particular significance also in view of the very recent intensification of the conflict in the Central African Republic.

For Austria, the topic, and the visit of M. Reveyrand de Menthon has particular relevance because of the participation of a small contingent of troops in the EU Training Mission in Mali.