



**National Endowment
for Democracy**
Supporting freedom around the world



The Bridges Institute
Strengthening Africa through Global Partnerships

SAHEL STRATEGY FORUM

A partnership between the National Endowment for Democracy and The Bridges Institute

Background

The recent humanitarian, political, and security crises in Mali have been a wake-up call to most Africa observers as it not only proved that security issues in Sahelian countries can no longer be examined individually, but also that democracy, peace and security are critical to any socio-economic development. The 2013 [UN Regional Integrated Strategy for the Sahel](#), the [EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel](#) and the Sahel strategy of the [Community of Sahel-Saharan States](#) (CEN-SAD), have further stressed the inter-connected political, military, humanitarian and developmental challenges of the Sahel region.

These challenges require a collective, coordinated and effective response through stronger regional and international cooperation. Given the number of important actors present in Washington, DC and currently implementing programs in the Sahel region, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), in partnership with the Bridges Institute, propose to host a regular *Sahel Strategy Forum* that would bring together practitioners, academics, NGOs and US Government agencies on a regular basis to discuss the fluid situation on the ground and develop recommendations to strengthen governance and human well-being in the region.

A DC-based permanent policy forum and recommendation giving body

The Sahel Policy Forum will promote **democratic values, stronger accountability mechanisms, peace, security and development** throughout the Sahel by:

- Providing a platform for program implementers, the donor and diplomatic communities to share challenges and best practices in democracy assistance and promotion;
- Exchanging information on major political events and democratic impediments in the sub-region and their effects on individual Sahel countries;
- Liaising with Congress and US policy-makers on issues of democracy, peace and security in the Sahel;
- Promoting trans-Atlantic cooperation through an active participation of the EU DC office and European Embassies in the forum's activities;
- Inviting exiles and indigenous civil society groups to provide input in the forum's discussions and activities.

A strong steering committee and diverse membership

The steering committee will include representatives from the Embassy of Mali, Ambassador MamanSidikou (from Niger), Ambassador CheikhNiang (from Senegal) who will represent the ECOWAS Expert Group for Development, the National Endowment for Democracy (represented by Kamissa Camara), the Bridges Institute (led by Vivian LoweryDerryck), the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and the Open Society Foundations. Eventually, the group will expand to include Ambassadors from the core Sahel region, NGOs working on the Sahel, academics, and diaspora representatives. US government briefing and participation in discussions will be an integral part of the forum.

The Sahel Strategy Forum will hold regular meetings alternating between policy discussions about core Sahel countries - including Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, Chad, Burkina Faso and Nigeria - regional issues, and presentations by experts on new ideas and frameworks for approaching the challenges facing the Sahel region.

For more information on this initiative, please contact Ms. Kamissa Camara, West Africa Program Officer at the NED (kamissac@ned.org) or Mrs. Vivian Lowery Derryck, President and CEO at The Bridges Institute (vlderryck@gmail.com)