



**Statement of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel at the Launch of the
Voices from the Sahel Conversations on the Spark Blue Conversations Platform.**

11 October 2021.

Dear Youth and Women of the Sahel,

Welcome to this first ever Conversation between the United Nations and peoples of the Sahel on this platform: <http://www.sparkblue.org/UN-SahelianConversations/discussion/engagement-youth-and-women-sahel>

I am **Abdoulaye Mar Dieye**, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Development in the Sahel with the responsibility of coordinating the UN's development agenda according to the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and its Support Plan. I am a Sahelian too, and as a child of the Sahel, I feel particularly concerned by the vast challenges we are confronted with as a people.

Yet, the challenges we face as Sahelians are not insurmountable. Even though some are natural as it pertains to the unique geographic location of the region, a vast majority of the problems are man-made. Man-made problems are solvable, but require extreme commitment and dedication, from all. As such, we have to think about these challenges and find pragmatic ways to solve them. One of the ways of doing this, is through dialogue – direct conversations with the people of the Sahel, including with the most energetic - the youth and women of the region.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I am happy to inform you that I will be with you all this week to directly engage with you in this conversation. Jointly we would explore the opportunities and the challenges of development in the Sahel. It is on this basis, that I now officially launch this discussion, 'Voices of the Sahel Conversations, Visions and Solutions' and invite you to start responding to the four questions post on the Dashboard.

Please, feel free to respond in any language of your choice (French or English). This platform will automatically translate it.

Dear Friends, this Conversation is about the Sahel and the Sahelians. So, let's talk, let's be frank and innovative, push the boundaries a little bit, think out of the box and come up with our suggestions on how to build the Sahel collectively for the present and the next generations.

I shall be responding to your views/reactions/comments and feedback. I look forward to a stimulating, interesting and exciting conversations on these topics.

**Warmest regards,
Mar**