

Mali donors' conference finances imperialist scramble for Africa

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A donor conference organised by the European Union, France and Mali on May 13 brought together 108 countries and international institutions in Brussels. They pledged €3.25 billion for Mali in 2013 and 2014 to “reconstruct” the former French colony.

The list of donors gives an idea of the powers vying for influence in Africa and specifically in the Sahel region, which houses vast reserves of oil, gas, uranium, gold and other precious minerals. The European Union (EU) pledged €520 million, France €280 million, the USA \$367 million, the UK and Denmark €15 million each, Germany €100 million, the World Bank €250 billion, the Islamic Development Bank €130 million and China €50 million.

EU development aid commissioner Andris Piebalgs said the stabilisation road map for Mali was the cornerstone of the international community's commitment to the country and had to be followed resolutely. He insisted that beyond Mali, “the EU's commitment is regional,” extending to the wider Sahel area.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius asserted that “through Mali, the future of the sub-region and beyond is at stake,” warning that there were strings attached to the aid. He said particular attention would be paid to the traceability of aid follow-up of projects.

The donations are not humanitarian in character, but rather aim to stabilize the Western-backed regime in Mali and assist the ongoing French- and US-led war in the country.

Since France invaded Mali on January 11, Mali has been occupied by 4,500 French troops leading some 7,000 soldiers sent by the puppet governments of the neighbouring ECOWAS (Economic Community West African States) countries, as well as Chad.

The original April date for withdrawal of the French

contingent is now well past, and the UN already announced it will send 11,200 additional soldiers and 1,440 special police forces into the whole region, which will come mainly from France. Paris has said that 1,000 soldiers will remain in Mali even after 2013 to back up a UN force.

British Prime Minister David Cameron declared in January that Britain would “work with others to close down the ungoverned space” in northwest Africa, “a global threat” which would “require a response that is about years, even decades, rather than months.”

Though opposition Islamist and Tuareg-nationalist forces have been driven from the towns they occupied in northern Mali, they continue to mount attacks on French, Malian army and ECOWAS contingents.

The resistance is growing because of the cruelty of the Malian army against the Tuareg and the brutality of all the occupation forces against the vast majority of the population of the country. Apart from the ravages of the war, the famine and the displacement of 500,000 people, much of the poverty and economic disruption of this desperately poor nation was caused by the economic and aid embargo imposed by France and its allies when Captain Amadou Sanogo carried out his military coup on March 22, 2012.

The donors aim to strengthen the occupation forces in advance of the July 28 deadline set for national elections for a government to take over from French-backed interim president Dioncounda Traoré. This will mean placing the entire north under the control of the central government in the capital, Bamako, which is controlled by the French army. The US is stipulating that no aid will be forthcoming until the elections are carried out.

If the elections did not take place in the North, this would amount to a de facto division of the

country—something the imperialist powers fear, as otherwise northern Mali will harbour forces that threaten the French Areva company's uranium mining activities in Algeria and Niger. France's uranium, mined in the area, is required for its nuclear weapons and power plants, which supply 75 percent of the country's electricity.

These geostrategic motivations underlie not only the war itself, but also the funds lavished on it by the donors in Brussels.



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