

2026 Counter-Terrorism Week

SIDE EVENTS

1 JULY 2026, 16:30-18:00

Conference Room 11, United Nations Headquarters, New York



United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime



Activating the CONNECT Strategic Framework for Enhanced Coordination through Operational Networks against the Nexus between Crime and Terrorism in Africa

Rationale

Recent developments and threat assessments of terrorist activities worldwide have shown that terrorist groups have adjusted their modus operandi and business model. Terrorist groups have established strong linkages and mutually beneficial relationship with transnational organized crime groups. This issue is particularly prevalent in Africa, including in North and West Africa, notably in the Sahel.

Against this backdrop, African Member States, with the support of the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB), have developed a Strategic Framework called “CONNECT - Coordination through Operational Networks against the Nexus between Crime and Terrorism”.

CONNECT is based on a strategic approach and extensive consultations with Member States to respond to the latest trends regarding the nexus between terrorism and organized crime, and to ensure it is an Africa-owned and Africa-led initiative at all stages of its development and implementation.

It is a platform for multilateral dialogue and cooperation, driven by the need for collective investments in security, ensuring African ownership of the Strategic Framework, through an intensive consultative process, interventions tailor-made to the actual needs of the countries, and the use of the African expertise.

CONNECT proposes an integrated, multi-faceted, and holistic approach to disrupting the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, enhancing state capacities, and fostering international cooperation across continents.

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The first Chapter of CONNECT focuses on West Africa and the Sahel. It targets global and transcontinental ramifications of criminal groups, ranging from Latin America, through the West African coastal countries, the Sahel, and the Lake Chad Basin region, Northern Africa, towards the Mediterranean region and Europe.

Furthermore, CONNECT can be used as a platform for the promotion of Diplomacy of Security. Through the Strategic Framework, Member States can further enhance dialogue on security matters of mutual interest and develop multilateral complementary frameworks with key strategic partners around the world.

UNODC's consultations with relevant Member States have underscored the above-mentioned threats and risks, calling for targeted technical investment and action. In November 2024, the African Group of Member States in Vienna officially approved the CONNECT framework, underscoring the full ownership of African Member States in the process and validation of the model. This engagement was echoed in May 2025 during a high-level event, featuring interventions from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Italy, Japan and Morocco, who praised the CONNECT strategic framework as an innovative, holistic, and adaptable solution for each State and region to effectively counter terrorism and its links with organized crime. In February 2026, Member States reiterated their full engagement in CONNECT during a Plenary Meeting of the African and European Ambassadors Groups in Vienna. During the meeting, Member States requested UNODC to start the development of the CONNECT East Africa Chapter.

CONNECT has recently been bolstered by an expansion of key partnerships and the initiation of preliminary activities, such as an exchange visit between Central Sahel countries and Morocco (September 2025); a regional meeting in Mauritania (September 2025); as well as a series of coordination roundtables between Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia (in 2025 and 2026). These steps have been laying the groundwork towards the activation and launch of CONNECT, and will mark a new chapter in the global cooperation to confront terrorism and its linkages with organized crime.

This high-level side event will serve as a concrete activation of the West Africa & the Sahel chapter of the CONNECT Strategic Framework. In this context, each partner country will highlight one specific domain of activation of CONNECT, reflecting its national priorities, expertise, and ongoing efforts in CONNECT. This approach will illustrate the operational dimension of CONNECT, showcase tangible areas of engagement, and demonstrate how a coordinated platform can leverage the comparative advantages of each partner to collectively address the nexus between terrorism and organized crime.

In this context, the co-organizing CONNECT partner countries, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Morocco and Nigeria, will present concrete contributions for the activation of CONNECT across the theatres of operation. Guest speakers from key institutions including the African Union, the European Union, Italy, and Japan will also intervene.

Objectives

- Reaffirm the importance of multidimensional and tailored responses to prevent and counter the nexus between terrorism and organized crime;
- Activate CONNECT and showcasing concrete actions by partner countries, highlighting respective contributions within the strategic framework;
- Consolidate political support and broaden partnerships to ensure the sustainability and expansion of CONNECT.

Relevance to the topic of the overall event theme and strategic focus

The operationalization of CONNECT directly contributes to the theme of the 2026 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week and the High-Level Conference marking the sixth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (UNGCTS), namely, “A Future Free from Terrorism: Consolidating the Global Commitment to Multi-Stakeholder Approaches to Counter Terrorism through Member States’ Leadership and Action”. By placing African Member States at the forefront of a coordinated and regionally owned response to the evolving nexus between terrorism and organized crime, CONNECT translates into concrete action the commitments made by Member States under the UNGCTS. Developed by African Member States with the support of UNODC, CONNECT advances the implementation of several pillars of the Strategy, notably through strengthening international cooperation, enhancing national capacities, and addressing conditions conducive to terrorism through multidimensional and tailored responses. By bringing together counter-terrorism institutions, regional fora, and international partners within a structured operational network, CONNECT embodies a practical and multi-stakeholder mechanism for delivering on the objectives of the UNGCTS.

Logistical information

Exact title: Activating the CONNECT Strategic Framework for Enhanced Coordination through Operational Networks against the Nexus between Crime and Terrorism in Africa.

Co-organizers: CONNECT partner countries (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria) with the support of the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch.

Partners: the African Union, the European Union, Italy and Japan.

Format: Hybrid – *The link will be provided shortly.*

Interpretation: None. The event will be held in English.

Webcasting: None

Important Note

Participants must ensure that they have a valid United Nations Headquarters ground pass to attend the side event, as it will be required to access the building.

Agenda

Chair: H.E. Ms. Maimounata Ouattara, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to Austria and to the Vienna Based International Organizations.	
16:30-16:45	Opening Remarks - H.E. Ms. Maimounata Ouattara, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to Austria and to the Vienna Based International Organizations. - Mr. Idriss Mounir Lallali, Acting Director of the African Union Counter-Terrorism Centre (AUCTC) - Mr. Roberto Arbitrio, Chief of the Terrorism Prevention Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
16:45-17:00	Activating the CONNECT Strategic Framework: Celebrating the CONNECT Strategic Framework and the West Africa & the Sahel Chapter H.E. Ms. Maimounata Ouattara, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso to Austria and to the Vienna Based International Organizations
17:00-17:25	Activating the CONNECT Strategic Framework: Contributions to the CONNECT West Africa & the Sahel Chapter - H.E. Ambassador Amar Bendjama, Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations in New York - H.E. Ambassador Ihab Moustafa Awad Moustafa, Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations in New York - Ms. Elizabeth Yankah, Deputy National Security Coordinator of Ghana - Representative of Morocco - Major General AG Laka, National Coordinator, National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), Office of the National Security Adviser, Nigeria
17:25-17:40	- Ms. Anna Strzaska, Special Envoy for Counter-Terrorism, European External Action Service (EEAS), European Union - H.E. Ambassador Gianluca Greco, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations in New York - H.E. Ambassador MINAMI Hiroyuki, Representative of the Government of Japan, Ambassador in charge of International Cooperation for Countering Terrorism and International Organized Crime
17:40-18:00	Q&A Session & Conclusion