



United Nations Global
COUNTER-TERRORISM
Coordination Compact

Tenth United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Committee Meeting

24-25
JANUARY
2024
NEW YORK

Discussion on
“Strategic Coordination of
Counter-Terrorism Initiatives
in Africa: Challenges and
Opportunities”

Annex I
24 JANUARY: HYBRID



UNOCT
#UniteToCounterTerrorism

Mr. António Guterres

Secretary-General of the United Nations underscored the significance of the United Nations as a representation of humanity's highest ideals: peace, dialogue, development, human rights, and collaboration. He stressed that terrorism stands in stark contrast to these ideals, presenting a global threat that spared no one. The Secretary-General highlighted that Africa has become the global epicentre of terrorism in recent years, noting that "Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their affiliates are exploiting local conflict dynamics and fragilities to advance their agendas, while shredding the social fabric of entire countries with the blades of violence, mistrust and fear," disproportionately harming women and girls and forging ties with organized crime. He emphasized the urgent need for action against this "growing inferno", while highlighting positive efforts by Member States and sub-regional organizations across Africa, including through the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2719 (2023) on the financing of African Union-led peace support operations. The Secretary-General further noted that "our collective response to terrorism must be grounded in the principles that define our shared humanity – respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the pursuit of peace," as well as "in strategies that reflect marginalized and vulnerable communities;" and called on the international community to continue standing together and forging new solutions that lift the shadow of terrorism, once and for all, "for Africa, for Africans and for the world we share."

Mr. Vladimir Voronkov

Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), underlined that "despite more than a decade of multifaceted counter-terrorism efforts, Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their affiliates continue to exploit instability and conflict to expand and intensify attacks in parts of Africa," especially in the Sahel and along the Gulf of Guinea. To address the transnational nature of terrorism, he reiterated the need to strengthen international cooperation, particularly with regional organizations. Highlighting collaboration with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and other regional and sub-regional organizations, USG Voronkov underscored that joint focus on prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration (PRR) of individuals formerly associated with terrorist groups has proven effective in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Somalia. He also noted that UNOCT continue to provide specialized training benefitting over 40 African Member States through its Programme Offices in Rabat and Nairobi, and underscored that the situation "demands a more robust response that draws on the best knowledge, which is well coordinated and adequately funded." In this regard, USG Voronkov highlighted the relevance of the UN Joint Appeal for Counter-Terrorism in Africa – a collaborative endeavor of 16 Compact entities in support of ten strategic multi-partner initiatives, which respond

to national priorities and technical assistance needs identified by the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and its Executive Directorate (CTED).

Furthermore, USG Voronkov drew attention to the UN Secretary-General's vision of UN 2.0 "Quintet of Change," and proposed the launch of a new Working Group on Behavioral Sciences to prevent radicalization and violent extremism, which will work closely with UNOCT's International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter-Terrorism based in Doha. In this regard, he informed that the Compact Secretariat will consult all Compact entities regarding the Working Group's Terms of Reference, including its objectives, scope of work and composition. USG Voronkov also recalled that the General Assembly's mandate, outlined in operative paragraph 96 of the eighth review resolution of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS), presents a unique opportunity to assess the impact of our efforts in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, appealing to Member States to allocate appropriate resources to conduct a full-fledged and independent evaluation aimed at yielding robust findings on results achieved, good practices, and lessons learned. To this end, he urged Compact entities to collaborate with the Counter-Terrorism Compact Working Group on Resource Mobilization, Monitoring and Evaluation in the development of a unified results framework and the evaluative exercise, noting its critical importance for a meaningful measurement and assessment of collective impact. Finally, USG Voronkov emphasized that "this Compact provides us with a framework for effective collaboration to support Member States' counter-terrorism efforts and is a testament to our shared commitment to a world free from terrorism."

Regional Perspectives

Dr. Omar Alieu Touray

President of the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), stressed that terrorism is the major security threat faced by ECOWAS Member States, which was initially confined to certain countries in the Sahel (Mali and Niger) and the Lake Chad Basin (Nigeria), then spread to Burkina Faso, and is now a real threat to coastal countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo). He recalled alarming statistics from 2023, including 3,587 recorded terrorist attacks in the ECOWAS region, with significant incidents in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger resulting in close to 9,000 fatalities, including 7,000 in those three Sahelian countries. In addition to the unbearable toll on human lives, Dr. Touray noted that insecurity continues to have dire humanitarian consequences, providing concerning data on food insecurity, internal displacement, and closed schools in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. He underscored that the transnational nature of the terrorist threat, and the important resources required to address it, have forced Member States to initiate collective actions within the framework of existing regional and continental groupings or through the creation of ad-hoc arrangements. In addition, Dr. Touray noted that

partner states and institutions have launched some initiatives aiming at contributing to the fight against terrorism, ending up with multiple initiatives in the region, including the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (MNJTF), the Nouakchott Process (AU), the Accra Initiative, Operation Barkhane, the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger), the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and G5 Sahel Joint Force until recently, besides ECOWAS own counter-terrorism initiatives. He proposed to integrate the various initiatives presented over the years by different stakeholders into a regional Plan of Action to facilitate coordination, promote ownership, and enhance inclusion. Dr. Touray concluded by emphasizing the Security Council's responsibility in maintaining global peace, expressing gratitude for the support given to Africa's call for predictable funding of Africa-led peace support missions through assessed contributions.

H.E. Ms. Alya Ahmed Saif Al-Thani

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, highlighted the critical role of the Counter-Terrorism Compact in strategic coordination of counter-terrorism efforts, underscoring the financial support provided for the Compact's Secretariat, seed funding for Working Groups projects, and the development of the Compact's Coordination Platform as a digital gateway for fostering efficient and inclusive partnerships and collaboration among Compact entities and Member States. Ambassador Al-Thani noted that with Africa becoming increasingly significant in the global terrorism and counter-terrorism landscape, it is essential for the Counter-Terrorism Compact to concentrate on the unique challenges and opportunities on the continent, which includes identification of emerging challenges, gaps in response and areas of possible action. Accordingly, she noted that coordinated concrete measures need to be taken by governments, regional organizations, civil society, and the UN system. Ambassador Al-Thani underscored that UNOCT took significant steps in supporting African nations to enhance their counter-terrorism capabilities by establishing Programme offices in Kenya and Morocco, and noted that numerous global programmes implemented by UNOCT and Compact entities, many of which are funded by the State of Qatar, have significant activities and projects in African countries. She highlighted the UN Joint Appeal for Counter-Terrorism in Africa as a good example of multilateral action to deliver integrated and innovative responses to complex priority challenges across Africa., Finally, Ambassador Al-Thani stressed the importance for the activities of the Counter-Terrorism Compact and its Joint Programme of Work to be aligned with the periodic review of the GCTS, noting the crucial need to incorporate human rights, legal, and gender perspectives into all efforts, as well as the continuous monitoring and evaluation to assess project's real impact and to ensure that support to countries aligns with their national priorities.

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations, underscored the effectiveness of the Counter-Terrorism Compact in addressing the persistent and evolving threat of terrorism globally, and highlighted Africa's unique challenges, stemming from a complex mix of economic, historical, and sociopolitical factors. He noted that the continent, with the world's youngest population, faces a critical lack of economic opportunities, growing inequality, and livelihood-destroying extreme climate events, contributing to vulnerabilities exploited by terrorist groups. Ambassador Kimani further underscored that the historical backdrop of colonial and post-colonial legacies has left many African states grappling with challenges in governance, and the maintenance of control of all national territory, while rapid urbanisation and the globalization of culture are eroding traditional forms of local and communal authority on the continent. In this regard, he stressed that the resulting social transformation, coupled with economic crises, creates vacuums that global terrorism actors, including Al-Qaida and Da'esh affiliates, are eager to exploit, which combined with under-investment in counter-terrorism efforts in Africa and double standards in dealing with terrorism compared to more developed regions only worsen these challenges. To address these issues, he noted that Africa-centred approaches to counter-terrorism, while necessary, risk creating a form of ghettoisation if not integrated into global strategies, calling for inclusive efforts, as underscored by Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023), which advocates for African-led peace operations as a key component of counter-terrorism efforts. Ambassador Kimani stressed that this approach requires acknowledging the interconnected nature of today's security challenges, where terrorism not only poses an immediate threat to security but also jeopardises Africa's development, economic stability, and social cohesion, which demands a robust and comprehensive response, as embodied by the Compact. He appreciated the investments in coordinating counter-terrorism efforts, including through the establishment of UNOCT's offices in Nairobi and Rabat, which are vital in delivering coordinated capacity and resources; and emphasized the importance of engaging in coordinated national and local interventions, pooling resources and capacities, and fully integrating a framework for monitoring, evaluation, and learning in implementing the GCTS. Ambassador Kimani concluded by urging governments to proactively engage with Africa's dynamic youth population by nurturing cultural and artistic expression, enabling the youth to constructively critique society and view themselves as agents of positive change, and to facilitating spaces that create alternative narratives to anti-democratic and inhumane ideologies, demonstrating that the youth have a significant role in shaping their society's future.

H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations, underscored that terrorism poses a global critical threat, particularly highlighting the challenges faced in addressing terrorism in Africa with the influx of foreign terrorist fighters and the rise of local militias due to insufficient security forces in some parts of the continent. He further noted that a multiplicity of driving factors such as unemployment, desertification, and climate change exacerbate the situation, as well as the diversity of initiatives and the lack of efficient coordination, which lead to challenges in ownership and inclusion. Ambassador Hilale emphasized the need for a political, economic, and social response, including by achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscored the importance of bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation in the fight against terrorism, and outlined the need for: (i) enhancing coordination of counter-terrorism efforts; (ii) implementing border management strategies; (iii) strengthening efforts to identify terrorist financing sources; (iv) leveraging emerging technologies; (v) fostering cooperation among counter-terrorism agencies; and (vi) adapting the collective experience of African Member States to the current context of terrorist attacks. Furthermore, he also noted the need to enhance the technical capacities of national authorities to promote collaboration and intelligence sharing, underscoring the crucial role played in this regard by UNOCT's Programme Office for Counter-Terrorism and Training in Africa in Rabat, and underlined the importance of promoting engagement with women and youth as well as economic development to counter extremist ideologies. Ambassador Hilale concluded by stressing the need to: (i) tackle food insecurity, including through access to technology to build resilience to climate change; (ii) strengthen maritime security and the use of the Atlantic coast as a lever for core development; (iii) promote human security and human rights; and (iv) support states and governments to build strong and robust institutions that put people at the heart of their policies.

Mr. Idriss Mounir Lallali

Director of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), commended the Counter-Terrorism Compact's remarkable support to the African Union (AU) and its Member States in counter-terrorism efforts, and underscored the importance of international cooperation, emphasizing the need to build on strengths, experiences, and local knowledge to address the transnational threat of terrorism. He informed that according to the ACSRT Database, the African continent registered over 3,000 terrorist incidents in 2023 which resulted in over 16,000 deaths, with civilians bearing the brunt over security forces and military personnel. Mr. Lallali further noted that this upward trend and continued expansion, in particular in the Sahel, has been aggravated by the continued political instability and the impact of the drawdown of peacekeeping missions and the freezing of Western support to the affected countries as a result of unconstitutional changes

of government and the increased use of mercenary forces and private military contractors in the fight against terrorism. This has left local populations in the affected areas live in an environment of absolute insecurity, fear, psychological trauma and often at the mercy of the terrorist and violent extremist groups. He also expressed concern over the intricacies of the terrorist threat, noting that terrorist groups continue to occupy and control some portions of national territories in a number of affected Member States, where they tend to run their own criminal economies in conjunction with transnational organized criminal networks. Mr. Lallali underscored that the transnational nature of the threat commands priority attention and synergy in response generation efforts at all levels, by the UN, AU, regional organizations and mechanisms, with the latter being better positioned to articulate the international obligations into concrete local actions and programmes, while ensuring complementarity with existing mechanisms and initiatives. In his view, this will ensure greater impact, tailored assistance, local ownership and sustainable responses not only against the threat, but most importantly in addressing its root causes and in aligning local counter-terrorism efforts with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Finally, Mr. Lallali underscored that bilateral and multilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism are no longer options, but a necessity, reiterating that the ACSRT and the AU look forward to working with the UN on encouraging African Member States to develop comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategies and support them in their effective implementation.

Ms. Nadia Costantini

European Union Special Envoy for Counter-Terrorism / Head of Counter-Terrorism Division, European External Action Service, Co-Chair of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), underlined the commitment to increase multilateral cooperation and strengthen regional counter-terrorism efforts in Africa. She stressed the importance of an inclusive and African-led approach to tackle terrorism and underscored the determination of African GCTF Members, including Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa, in promoting a balanced approach to countering terrorism. Ms. Constantini further emphasized the critical role of regional and sub-regional organizations in addressing the terrorist threat, particularly the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and underlined the importance of engaging local communities and practitioners. In this regard, she noted that GCTF will set a precedent by establishing a first consultation with civil society actors on the margins of its 23rd Coordinating Committee meeting, to be held during the week of 26 February 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya, aimed at exploring the vital role of communities, especially in reintegration and rehabilitation of former terrorists and their engagement with local governments. Ms. Constantini further stressed the growing importance of East Africa in GCTF's efforts and the sustained focus on West Africa, where the situation is particularly worrying; the need to share planning and outcomes of priority initiatives and programmes; the importance of coordination and

transparent approaches in counter-terrorism efforts; and the need to place strategic emphasis on countering terrorist narratives and propaganda, particularly in East Africa. She concluded by highlighting the important role played by the Global Coalition against Da'esh, including the expertise brought by Kuwait in this domain as a new GCTF member, as well as the need for strengthening strategic communication and collaboration.

Ms. Fauziya Abdi Ali

Founder and President of Women in International Security – Horn of Africa (WIIS HOA), underscored the daunting challenge Africa faces in eradicating terrorism, emphasizing the continent's increasing vulnerability to violence and complex situations. She underlined that with numerous presidential and general elections scheduled across 19 countries, including Sahelian nations, the outcomes will significantly influence governance trajectories and security threats. Highlighting the conditions for sustainable democracies, Ms. Ali noted the presence of individuals and groups challenging the foundations of open societies. In this regard, she stressed the integral role of gender equity and equality in combating terrorism, asserting that wide inequality and unaddressed gender-based violence create fertile ground for extremist ideologies. Moreover, she underscored the impact of technology on women's engagement in decision-making and emphasized how terrorists misuse cyber platforms and social media for recruitment and propaganda. Ms. Ali also noted the multifaceted nature of security, which extends beyond rules and patrols to encompass education, jobs, and communities, while emphasizing the importance of a local approach in addressing terrorism, incorporating psychosocial support, economic opportunities, and community engagement. In conclusion, she emphasized a people-centered approach to counter-terrorism in Africa, focusing on building strong foundations, securing democratic processes, fostering collaboration, and maintaining compassion to overcome challenges and create a terrorism-free future.

Ms. Naureen Chowdhury Fink

Executive Director of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), underscored the growing concern among counter-terrorism practitioners and communities as terrorist attacks in Africa have surged in recent years. She stressed that Africa represents about half of all terrorism-related deaths globally, with Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 60% of such fatalities in 2022. These challenges, she underlined, are compounded by governance, development, and border management issues. Ms. Fink recalled how Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates in regions like the Sahel and East Africa exploit local challenges, with reduced opportunities for international counter-terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) engagement. She emphasized the intricate dynamics where terrorist groups use sophisticated social media strategies for

propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and the low-cost high visibility that online platforms and media offer, which exacerbates the threat. Ms. Fink reaffirmed GIFCT's commitment to collaborating with regional and industry partners to understand and respond to the evolving threat, and highlighted specific initiatives such as GIFCT's regional workshop focusing on the current threat landscape in West Africa, conducted in partnership with Ghana, partnerships with the Aqaba Process, and engagement with law enforcement agencies, including discussions in Rwanda. She further informed about ongoing efforts to address terrorism and violent extremism through expert roundtables, recognizing the collective capacity of diverse platforms. Finally, Ms. Fink underscored GIFCT's crucial role in harnessing the tech industry's commitment and expertise; reaffirmed its dedication to preventing and countering terrorism through the promotion and protection of human rights; and reiterated GIFCT's commitment to adapting to evolving threats in the terrorist landscape.

Outcome-oriented discussion amongst UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact entities

Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), emphasized the pressing need for coordinated efforts in combating terrorism in Africa among national agencies, Member States, and international organizations, particularly Counter-Terrorism Compact entities, further underscoring that the interconnected challenges of terrorism, organized crime, governance, and conflict on the continent require collaborative action. USG Waly recalled UNODC's on-the-ground support for African countries, focusing on rule of law solutions to counter terrorism, prevent radicalization, and enhance border security, and highlighted UNODC's Strategic Vision for Africa 2030, which prioritizes terrorism prevention as a key pillar. She informed of UNODC's field presence in 40 African countries, implementing terrorism prevention activities in 51 countries across all subregions of the continent, and noted ongoing engagements with the African Union and the ACSRT, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, SADC, and the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs' Cooperation Organization. USG Waly concluded by outlining two key considerations for achieving long-term results: (i) the need to move beyond security-focused responses to terrorism, advocating for comprehensive and sustainable approaches that include prevention and whole-of-society engagement; and (ii) the importance of maximizing existing coordination mechanisms in each African sub-region, proposing the connection of existing networks rather than establishing new, potentially overlapping mechanisms.

Ms. Natalia Gherman

Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) and Executive Director, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), noted that the concerning evolution of the terrorist threat in Africa, as observed in the Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea, the Lake Chad Basin, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa, illustrates the importance of ensuring that UN counter-terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism efforts are attuned to national and regional dynamics. ASG Gherman recalled that CTED actively participates in the Counter-Terrorism Compact, serving as Chair and Vice-Chair in various Working Groups, and stressed that in the development of the 2024–2026 Compact Joint Programme of Work, CTED continued to emphasize the need for Compact entities to use CTED’s analysis and the Counter-Terrorism Committee’s recommendations in the design of technical assistance and capacity-building efforts. She informed that in the last five years, CTED conducted, on behalf of the Committee, visits to Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sudan, Togo and Uganda, making available to Compact entities with the consent of the Member State, the visit reports of Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Togo, and Uganda, as well as 16 desk assessments of African States. Executive Director Gherman further noted that the technical assistance needs identified during these visits demonstrate that the vast majority of African countries are “low-capacity” States in terms of their compliance with requirements of Security Council resolutions, and advocated for enhanced engagement with UN country teams to assist with coordination among UN agencies present in the Member State, resource mobilization, and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects to address identified technical assistance needs. As an example, she highlighted a pilot project that CTED, UNOCT, the Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team are conducting in Benin, under which the government has formally requested the development of a coordinated and prioritized UN technical assistance plan in support of the government’s efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. In this regard, she noted that moving forward, and drawing on the lessons from this pilot project, CTED and UNOCT will explore possibilities for similar initiatives for other visited Member States. Finally, Executive Director Gherman underlined that CTED will further contribute to an enhanced understanding of the terrorism and violent extremism landscape and its anticipated trajectory in Africa by mobilizing its Global Research Network, comprised of more than 100 research institutions, bringing together a variety of geographical perspectives on emerging terrorist threats, trends, and developments.

Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), underscored the significance of returning to the foundational principles outlined in the UN Charter when devising solutions to advance peace, recalling that both in the preamble and article 55, it is recognized that universal respect for human rights are preconditions for stability and peace. ASG Kehris also highlighted the GCTS, which ensures the respect for human rights and the rule of law as fundamental in the fight against terrorism, noting three starting points for effective action: (i) strategic coordination to align diverse entities toward common goals, particularly emphasizing the indispensable role of human rights in counter-terrorism efforts; (ii) a renewed focus on conflict prevention and peace sustaining aimed at preventing resurgence of violence and terrorism by examining root causes and promoting the rule of law and respect for human rights; and (iii) an inclusive and collaborative approach with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, civil society and affected communities. On the latter point, she proposed having civic space and civil society engagement as a standing agenda item for Coordination Committee meetings, and also adopting a Compact-wide protection strategy to address intimidation and reprisals faced by many civil society actors who are at risk, in order to enhance their participation. Sharing a lesson learned from OHCHR's work with the G5 Sahel Joint Force, ASG Kehris noted that coordination should also extend to both national and regional levels, making sure that they are linked up horizontally and vertically, which she noted is crucial for addressing all the sub-regional challenges and enhancing communication and coordination between investigation units, provost units and detachments. Finally, ASG Kehris stressed that having a unified, coordinated UN approach linked up to regional and sub-regional initiatives would contribute to the overall success of UN action on counter-terrorism, hand-in-hand with the African Union.

Ms. Sarah Hendriks

Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), recalled that misogyny and toxic masculinity are at the core of most terrorists' ideology, with women and girls disproportionately affected by the insecurity and aggravated inequalities caused, and noting that women and children constitute 78 percent of the forcibly displaced population in the East and Southern Africa region. She reiterated that women play a crucial role in prevention efforts, yet gender mainstreaming is often overlooked in policies and efforts aimed at preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, which tend to favor highly securitized and militarized approaches. Ms. Hendriks referred to the progress made since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), welcoming increased gender-related recommendations to Member States by CTED. Furthermore, she stressed the growing prioritization of preventing violent extremism in National Action Plans on Women, Peace, and

Security (WPS), with concurrent inclusion of WPS considerations in national counter-terrorism strategies. Touching on the strategic coordination of counter-terrorism efforts in Africa, Ms. Hendriks emphasized the imperative of meaningful participation and leadership of women in coordination, policies, and programmes, reiterating the criticality of funding women's organizations and using gender data to inform interventions aimed at preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism. Concluding, she emphasized that gender integration is not only a matter of equality but a critical imperative in countering terrorism and preventing its spread in Africa, as well as acknowledging and addressing the distinct experiences, vulnerabilities, and contributions of both men and women.

Mr. Turhan Saleh

Deputy Director, Crisis Bureau, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), underscored the escalating threat of violent extremism globally, with the Sahel region representing 43% of global terrorism deaths, and increasing concern over the spread of violent extremism in other parts of the continent, including Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Togo. He noted that data and evidence demonstrate that the path to violent extremism is multifaceted and complex, as shown by the following findings of UNDP's ground-breaking [Journey to Extremism in Africa: Pathways to Recruitment and Disengagement \(2023\)](#) report: (i) 71% of voluntary recruits mentioned human rights abuses or government actions against their family, relatives and friends as a 'tipping point' in their decision to join extremist groups; (ii) lack of job and livelihood opportunities were cited as the most important factor in leading people to join violent extremist groups; and (iii) 17% of voluntary recruits identified religion as a key driver, reflecting a shift from the common narrative that places religious ideologies as a chief motivating factor for voluntary recruits. Citing a complementary report on the "[Dynamics of Violent Extremism in Africa: Conflict Ecosystems, Political Ecology and the Spread of the Proto-State](#)" (2023), Deputy Director Saleh highlighted the need for an urgent shift from security-driven responses to development-based approaches emphasizing education, justice, rehabilitation and community integration. Based on the insights provided by the aforementioned reports and UNDP's PVE initiatives in 41 countries across five regions, he proposed the following four points: (i) a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach addressing both immediate security concerns and root causes of violent extremism, investing in education and empowering local communities; (ii) simultaneously harnessing innovation and technology to remain ahead of the evolving threat; (iii) strengthen partnerships with regional organizations and governments, providing as an example the recently launched UNDP's Atlantic Corridor project (2023-2025), covering Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo; and (iv) ensure coordination among Counter-Terrorism Compact entities to improve efficiency and collectively eradicate violent extremism.

Ms. Amy E. Pope

Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) highlighted that the global spread of violent extremism is one of the key factors contributing to the record levels of displacement. She underscored the correlation between socio-economic situation and the vulnerability of young people, particularly in Africa, where exclusion and marginalization make them susceptible to exploitation by armed groups in regions such as the Lake Chad Basin, Mozambique, Somalia, and the Sahel. Director General Pope stressed the importance of approaching the issue carefully, grounded in the observance of human rights, and cautioned against assuming every vulnerable person is a potential extremist. She reiterated the need to be vigilant against anti-migrant or xenophobic sentiment, emphasizing that the complex tasks of protecting migrant rights, facilitating cross-border movements, and upholding border security, require a delicate balance. Director General Pope highlighted IOM's response to challenges in African states, including the deployment of the IOM Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) to assist in collecting, processing, storing and analyzing traveler information in real-time, and also recalled the launch of the Integrated Border Stability Mechanism (IBSM), led by IOM, UNOCT, UNODC, and INTERPOL, to address the terrorism threat in West Africa. Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of addressing underlying conditions that often lead to violence through a people-centered approach that fosters social, economic, and political participation, with sensitivity to gender, youth, and conflict, as well as the need to build resilience at the local level, while thanking IOM's partners for their dedication to ensuring the safety, protection, and respect for human rights of all people on the move. Finally, Director General Pope reaffirmed IOM's commitment to championing a people-centered approach to reduce and thwart violent extremism, recognizing and honoring the unique strengths and aspirations of the African people.

Mr. Alexandre Zouev

Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law Security Institutions, United Nations Department of Peace Operations (DPO), underscored the persistent threat terrorism poses to international peace and security. He stressed the evolving and diversified drivers of terrorism, emphasizing that military responses are now widely considered insufficient. ASG Zouev noted that the Sahel region accounted for more deaths in 2022 than South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa combined, becoming an epicentre of terrorism, and emphasized the need to strengthen international counter-terrorism efforts in Africa with a preventive, holistic, and inclusive approach. He recalled African Member States' substantial investments in addressing security challenges, but noted limitations due to constrained resources and capacity, and stressed the equal importance of sustainable measures to address conflict drivers and related grievances while preventing human rights violations and civilian harm. ASG Zouev further noted that the exercise of force alone should never

be the response to entrenched security problems, pointing to its potential counterproductive consequences, proposed to focus on judicialized responses promoting the rule of law and reforming police and justice sector institutions, and underscored the need of embedding peace enforcement and counter-terrorism efforts in a wider political strategy to address conflict drivers and reduce recruitment from violent extremist groups. He concluded by reaffirming DPO's commitment to strengthening multilateral partnerships and cooperation through continuous strategic engagement with African Member States, and proposed to undertake a mapping of ongoing counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism initiatives, prioritizing UN engagement based on lessons learned in West and Central Africa.

Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee

Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO), underscored the severity of the issue, citing a Chatham House article indicating that in 2023 sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 48% of global deaths from terrorism, with attacks spreading beyond the historical hotspots such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa to Southern Africa and the coastal countries of West Africa. ASG Pobee highlighted concerning statistics and factors, including the absence of state presence and high youth unemployment that contributes to the ideal breeding ground for terrorist recruitment. She further stressed the importance of regional cooperation in combating terrorism and commended initiatives by the African Union, ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC in establishing counter-terrorism mechanisms, reiterating the significance of regional mechanisms such as the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin and the Accra Initiative. ASG Pobee called for more coordinated counter-terrorism efforts in Africa and proposed four recommendations: (i) advancing coordinated political solutions focusing on the needs of the most affected populations; (ii) coordinating military, humanitarian, governance, and development responses; (iii) leveraging key opportunities to strengthen integrated UN approach and support to Africa-led efforts to counter-terrorism; and (iv) facilitating capacity-building through South-South cooperation, emphasizing respect for human rights and protection of civilians.

Mr. Ben Saul

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, underscored the imperative for intensified collaboration between the UN, African states, and regional organizations to prevent and address state violations of human rights, recognizing their role as conditions conducive to terrorism. Special Rapporteur Saul stressed the unfortunate reality of abusing counter-terrorism measures themselves, thus aggravating rather than resolving terrorism, and emphasized the need for the UN

to insist on compliance with international and regional human rights standards in national and regional counter-terrorism measures. He therefore called for vigilance to ensure UN technical activities do not undermine human rights across various areas, including terrorism definition, criminal justice, countering terrorist financing, border management, administrative measures, and strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism. Furthermore, he underlined the importance of ensuring respect for international humanitarian law in military operations to counter terrorism in Africa. Special Rapporteur Saul also stressed that the UN should promote accountability for violations of human rights when countering terrorism, while strengthening African regional human rights mechanisms, enhance African engagement with international human rights procedures, the non-discriminatory protection of all victims of terrorism, and safe space for African civil society. Finally, he emphasized the critical need for adequate resources dedicated to human rights in counter-terrorism.

Ms. Violaine Clerc

Executive Secretary of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), underscored the gravity of terrorist financing and money laundering as crimes against peace and security, stressing their detrimental impact on sustainable development, particularly in conflict-affected low-capacity countries. Recognizing that terrorist organizations require funds for attacks, Executive Secretary Clerc emphasized that cutting off funding is crucial for creating conditions conducive to inclusive and sustainable growth aligned with the SDGs. While African countries have made progress in combating terrorist financing, she noted that they still encounter significant challenges and require international assistance, highlighting FATF's collaboration with the four FATF-style regional bodies in Africa to address the most pressing terrorist financing threats. Executive Secretary Clerc further noted that (i) the FATF coordinates efforts to understand and respond to global and regional terrorist financing risks, exemplified by recent work on the misuse of crowdfunding platforms for terrorist financing; (ii) cooperation with regional partners, international organizations, UNOCT, UNODC, CTED, and civil society partners contributes to a comprehensive global understanding of terrorist financing; and (iii) the FATF provides the international community with a targeted roadmap to collectively combat terrorist financing through mutual evaluation processes. Moving forward, she underscored a heightened focus on major risks faced by exposed countries, and increased collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and various UN bodies to ensure a coordinated approach to assess and strengthen requesting countries in their efforts to combat terrorist financing.

Ms. Ruvendrini Menikdiwela

Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), underscored UNHCR's awareness of the profound impact of conflict and violence in various regions of Africa. She highlighted the increasing number of people compelled to flee due to armed and terrorist groups attacks, particularly in the Sahel region, the Lake Chad Basin, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Assistant High Commissioner Menikdiwela stressed that insecurity, terrorism, and violence are significant drivers of forced displacement, posing threats not only to those displaced but also to returnees and host communities. She emphasized that women, children, youth, older people, and persons with disabilities are particularly affected in these contexts. In addressing crises, she stressed the need for a comprehensive approach that goes beyond security considerations and underscored that counter-terrorism approaches must integrate humanitarian and protection needs, recognizing the risks faced by affected populations. Assistant High Commissioner Menikdiwela further noted the importance of: (i) separating combatants from civilian populations; (ii) ensuring the civilian nature of displacement and returnee locations; (iii) grounding counter-terrorism measures in the rule of law and full respect for human rights to protect those fleeing persecution, conflict and violence, including terrorism; and (iv) ensuring the security of host countries and communities. She concluded by recalling UNHCR's renewed call to address the underlying causes of displacement, including the impact of climate change, and reiterating UNHCR's commitment to contribute to the Counter-Terrorism Compact and to supporting Member States in responding to security concerns while upholding international protection principles.

Mr. Leif Villadsen

Deputy Director of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), underscored UNICRI's active involvement across Africa in research, knowledge development, and capacity-building activities through which several challenges have been identified. He emphasized three main areas of concern: (i) the significant impact of climate change on violent extremism in Africa, on which he highlighted a relevant study conducted in the Sahel and joint work with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) on climate security policies, including a training manual addressing the 'triple nexus' of gender, climate change, and violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel; (ii) the persistence of gender-based discrimination as a major challenge in Africa, highlighting UNICRI's study on ["Voices of Resilience: A Gender Needs Analysis on Preventing Violent Extremism in the Sahel"](#); and (iii) the broad correlation between organized crime and terrorism, and the need for increased efforts to identify and address this nexus. Deputy Director Villadsen concluded referencing a recently launched

research initiative focusing on Private military companies and their recent rise in places like the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, and Mali.

Adoption of the 2024-2026 Joint Programme of Work (JPoW)

Mr. Rafi Shah

Chief of the Policy, Knowledge Management, and Coordination Branch, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), presented the Counter-Terrorism Compact Joint Programme of Work (JPoW) for 2024-2026 in his capacity as Head of the Counter-Terrorism Compact Secretariat. He noted that the JPoW was developed by the Secretariat in close consultation with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the eight Compact Working Groups, and for the first time also consulting Member States, regional organizations, civil society, and academia on the JPoW overarching priorities. Mr. Shah underscored that the JPoW provides strategic guidance to the Compact in supporting the implementation of GCTS and relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and informed that it is aligned with the eighth GCTS review resolution, spanning for three years until the next review. He presented the five JPoW overarching priorities: (i) enhance coordination and coherence of UN counter-terrorism efforts in supporting Member States, through a strengthened common action approach; (ii) strengthen engagement with Member States, aligned with the GCTS four pillars and national priorities of Member States, including on new technologies, countering terrorist financing, vulnerable targets, as well as implementing CTC/CTED assessments and recommendations; (iii) advance partnerships between the Compact, international, regional, and sub-regional organizations as well as civil society, including through field engagements, capacity-building, coordination, and supporting victims of terrorism; (iv) consolidate joint planning and resource mobilization for UN counter-terrorism efforts; and (v) ensure the mainstreaming of gender, human rights, and rule of law in countering-terrorism and preventing violent extremism. Mr. Shah also highlighted concrete deliverables aimed to be achieved by the Counter-Terrorism Compact under the 2024-2026 JPoW, underscored that the JPoW serves as a practical and results-based framework for the Coordination Committee to provide oversight and strategic guidance to the Working Groups for the GCTS implementation, and thanked Working Groups Chairs, Vice-chairs and Compact entities for their valuable contributions.