



Kenya and Ethiopia Present their Cross-Border Peace Initiative to Prevent Violent Extremism and Conflict in the Horn of Africa

New York, 1 October 2018 – Today, representatives from the Governments of Ethiopia and Kenya presented their cross-border peace initiative to prevent violent extremism and conflict in border regions. Focusing on a new regional policy to combat terrorism, participants from the European Union (EU), intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations also shared their experiences in the Horn of Africa.

The event was co-hosted by the Governments of Kenya and Ethiopia, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The Ethiopian-Kenyan cross-border initiative addresses the nexus between security and development bodies by focusing on resilience building, fighting marginalization and a strong engagement in border areas emphasizing the role of youth and women. Towards this objective, in many countries, including in Ethiopia and Kenya, decentralization policies in the form of devolution, have been implemented to delegate fiscal, administrative and financial authority to regional and county authorities. Through the devolution the authorities could establish a closer cooperation and coordination with border communities which has helped to effectively fight terrorism and violent extremism and conflict.

Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, Head of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), told participants that it was critical to recognize the importance of border security and the challenges that many countries face in preventing the transnational movements of terrorists. “The collaboration between Kenya and Ethiopia is a demonstration of the importance of tackling the threat of radicalization, violent extremism and conflict in a collaborative manner,” Mr. Voronkov said.

Ms. Eziakonwa of UNDP commended the initiative and said that “the root of extremism is exclusion from the economy and society”.

Cabinet Secretary Eugene Wamalwa of Kenya recognized progress made through building a “story of confidence instead of hopelessness along our borders, a story of our borders being bridges instead of barriers to development and integration, a story of peaceful sustainable development along our borders instead of insecurity and marginalization.”

The Deputy Permanent representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations, Ms. Mahlet Hailu spoke about “the testimony of the two governments’ and their commitment to address historical marginalization of this region, turning “cross border barriers into bridges of opportunity.”

The IGAD Executive Secretary, Mr. Mahboub Maalim stressed that “cohesive linkage through collaboration among all stakeholders enhances cross-border cooperation, ensures that we deny space to extremists and undermines their violent ideology.”

“Borders have traditionally been hubs of commercial activity and, at times, flashpoints for conflict. Cross border movement, including for those seeking a better livelihood or escaping terrorism, are all affecting the world,” said Michèle Coninx, Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED). Referring to the joint CTED-UNOCT visit to Kenya in July 2018, she commended how the drafting and implementation of county action plans increased ownership among communities and their overall effectiveness.

The keynote addresses were followed by a panel discussion entitled the “Ethiopia-Kenya Cross-Border Initiative: A Regional Strategy for Preventing Violent Conflict and Extremism”.

The Panel was moderated by Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee, the UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya. Participants included: **Hon. Micah Pkopus Powon**, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Devolution and Planning, State Department for Devolution; **Ambassador Martin Kimani**, Director, National Counter Terrorism Centre; **Mr. Josphat Nanok**, Chair of Council of Governors; **Dr. Simon Nyambura**, Director, IGAD Center of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and **H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ali**, Governor of Marsabit County.

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