



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General,
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Sixteenth Extraordinary Summit of the Assembly of the African Union
“Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa”**

28 May 2022, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Your Excellency, Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea,

Your Excellency, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Your Excellency, Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola,

Your Excellency, Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and Chairperson of the African Union,

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to represent Secretary-General António Guterres at this Summit.

Let me begin by thanking the Government and the people of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for hosting the Summit.

I would also like to thank the African Union for organizing this timely event which takes place in the context of a number of worrying trends across the continent.

Terrorism remains a significant global threat, affecting the lives and well-being of millions of people.

This threat has been felt particularly in the five regions of Africa, where terrorist activities have regrettably increased. According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index, approximately half of all deaths attributed to terrorism globally last year were recorded in the continent.

Terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida and Da'esh, as well as their affiliates, have intensified their attacks across the continent, promoting chaos, killing innocent civilians, exacerbating inter-communal tensions, contributing to humanitarian catastrophes, undermining state authority, and upending development.

In West Africa and the Sahel, they continue to exploit limited governing capacities, socio-economic fragilities and local grievances.

This challenge is further compounded by the intricate relationships between terrorists, armed groups and criminal networks, and the political upheaval caused by the recent wave of coups d'états.

In several countries, terrorist activities have exacerbated ongoing conflict dynamics, aggravating instability and human suffering. Reports of an increased influx of foreign terrorist fighters in some of these countries are also gravely concerning.

Outside of conflict settings, terrorists have adversely affected the pursuit of sustainable development and the enjoyment of peace. This is now becoming more evident in Eastern Africa.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The primary responsibility for countering terrorism rests with Member States and their institutions. Stable States in which the social contract is resilient make the most effective partners in countering and defeating terrorism.

Conversely, when stability and the social contract are weak or under assault, states will struggle to address terrorist activities. When that occurs, those who wield force on behalf of the state may seek to take matters into their own hands.

Unconstitutional changes of government, including ruptures in the constitutional order, severely undermine efforts to prevent and counter terrorism. They endanger human rights and the rule of law, and further threaten the social contract. The full respect for the rule of law and human rights is indispensable in our efforts to counter and prevent terrorism and violent extremism.

Excellencies,

Terrorist and violent extremist views often appeal to those who feel marginalized or alienated from their governments or societies, whether because of inequality, injustice or a lack of opportunity.

That is why prevention and counter-terrorism strategies and responses require an integrated and comprehensive approach.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite setbacks, we must recognize important gains in countering terrorism in Africa.

In the Secretary-General's recent visit to Nigeria, he saw first-hand the positive results obtained from a combination of successful action against Boko Haram and socio-economic initiatives aimed at reintegration and reconciliation.

Through similar approaches, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) has supported at their request Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Somalia with the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals formerly associated with terrorist groups.

We have also worked with Tunisia and Uganda on initiatives focused on the management of violent extremists in prisons and detention facilities, with the aim of preventing terrorist radicalization in those environments.

UNOCT's new offices in Kenya and Morocco will play an important role in helping African Member States build the capacities they need to prevent and counter violent extremism. I call on your continued support to ensure the impact and sustainability of these Offices moving forward.

We are also continuing our work on the preparations for the United Nations - African Union Working Group Meeting on Countering Terrorism and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, which will help us further improve our coordination.

Nigeria and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism are planning to organize an African High-Level International Conference on Counter-Terrorism, in Abuja, under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari. More details will be shared with you in due course.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations is proud to be your partner. I am proud to be your partner.

I am convinced we have much to achieve by working more closely together to tackle the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism in Africa.

You have my assurances that the United Nations will spare no effort in this regard.

We will continue to support Member States towards the realization of the AU Agenda 2063 and its promise of building the "Africa we want".

In closing, let me repeat the wise words of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during last year's second high-level conference of heads of counter terrorism agencies of Member States, I quote: – "Supporting African countries to prevent and counter the threats posed by terrorist groups must be a global priority for us all."

Thank you.