

**Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian**

**Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and Director, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism  
(UNOCT)**

**“Africa Dialogues on Counter Terrorism: Understanding and Responding to the terrorist threat in  
Africa”**

**11 May 2023, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Ambassador Gad, Mr. Marcos, Ambassador Markusen, and Commissioner Bankole for inviting me to this first and very timely and important dialogue, and for their remarks and those of Mr. Mosca.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Egypt on the assumption of its role as co-chair with the EU of the GCTF.

I am also honored to join Ambassador Fouad, SRSG Onanga, and Acting Director Lallali, with all of whom I have had the pleasure of working with for years.

The global terrorism picture is mixed. Although overall terrorism-related deaths declined somewhat last year and Da’esh and Al-Qaida continue to suffer leadership losses, terrorism remains a major threat to international peace and security, one that is particularly affecting countries in conflict, including in many parts of Africa.

Various UN and other assessments indicate that sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the Sahel region, is significantly affected by terrorist activity, despite more than a decade of multifaceted counter-terrorism efforts.

As noted in the Secretary-General’s 16<sup>th</sup> Report on the threat posed by Da’esh issued last February, the group and its affiliates continue to expand in West, Central, and East Africa, exploiting local conflict dynamics and fragilities to advance their agendas.

Meanwhile, Al-Qaida’s regional affiliate, Jama’a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), is trying to expand from the Sahel into northern areas of Gulf of Guinea countries. In some places, like Burkina Faso, terrorists control significant swaths of territory, making prevention efforts in those areas largely irrelevant.

Community by community, terrorist groups are extending their reach, widening their networks with more fighters, funding, and weapons increasingly flowing between regions and across the continent — and forging transactional relationships with organized crime and piracy groups, with online platforms adding a powerful tool to more traditional means of spreading violent ideologies.

We can now talk about a transcontinental phenomenon that spans regions, spilling over from country to country.

This bleak picture should not mask the important efforts sub-regional groups have made to counter terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. Just as terrorism drives people apart, countering it can bring people together, especially if Member States pursue the whole-of-society approaches the General Assembly has endorsed for fighting what are, in essence, terrorist insurgencies, which as history shows require resolution of underlying political issues, such as those SRSO Onanga pointed out about state legitimacy.

We are witnessing joint efforts against this threat by the G5 Sahel, the Multinational Joint Task force in the Lake Chad Basin, the Accra Initiative, and the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), as well as renewed determination by individual African leaders to stand together to fight back.

We see this resolve expressed even at the continental level by the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism, which took place on 28 May 2022 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea and its call to promote experience sharing and lesson learning among Member States and regional organizations to better coordinate and enhance regional and continental efforts in combatting terrorism.

The Summit also reaffirmed the imperative of adequate, sustainable and predictable financing for counter-terrorism efforts on the Continent and called for the “use of assessed contributions for AU-mandated Peace Support Operations (PSOs), to further strengthen counter-terrorism efforts and promote stabilization in the Continent”.

I congratulate the African Union for the progress it has made in responding to its financing shortfalls, setting the principle that AU Member States should fund the peace support operations budget. In 2016, AU Member States took the decision to endow the AU Peace Fund with \$400 million by 2023. As of last February, the Peace Fund has received \$337 million in assessed contributions from its Member States.

But that is not enough.

Over the past 15 years, numerous reports have been submitted to the Security Council on the importance of guaranteed predictable and sustainable funding for African Union peace operations. The importance of these operations is evident, and the case for ensuring adequate financial support is compelling.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly stressed the need for a new set of peace enforcement and counter-terrorism operations, under a Chapter VII mandates of the Security Council, led by regional forces with predictable and guaranteed funding.

As you are aware, there have been longstanding calls for the Security Council to rise to the challenge of laying the foundation for a new generation of African Union-led, United Nations-supported peace operations on the African continent.

The objective should be to ensure that the African Union has an enhanced ability to plan, deploy, manage, sustain and finance its peace support operations, illustrating the strong partnership between the African Union and the United Nations, and the need to collectively and effectively address the evolving threats to peace and security in Africa.

Security Council members themselves have increasingly acknowledged the AU's proactive role on matters of peace and security in Africa, including its enhanced capacity to respond rapidly to conflicts and crisis on the continent, particularly through the deployment of peace support operations. This demonstrates recognition for the commitment of African leaders to support peace operations by African States and for the African people.

I am pleased to note that the Security Council will soon consider a report by the Secretary-General related to UN support to African Union and other regional peace enforcement and counter-terrorism operations undertaken as part of a Chapter VII Security Council resolution. The outcome could well be a game-changer.

Excellencies,

In his report on *Our Common Agenda*, the UN Secretary-General called for a revitalized, comprehensive, and overarching prevention agenda. The New Agenda for Peace stemming out of that report will offer some concrete proposals to that effect. It will also clearly articulate the complexities of addressing terrorism as part of current threats to peace and security, as well as the need to ensure that broader prevention efforts address the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism.

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy also offers a framework for action in that regard, stressing multidimensional cooperation between Member States, civil society, as well as international and regional organisations, including the African Union. The General Assembly's ongoing review of the Strategy should result in concrete guidance regarding Member States's counter-terrorism priorities for the next two years.

Building off the momentum of next month's GA debate on the Strategy and high-level conference for heads of counter-terrorism agencies, UNOCT and Nigeria plan to co-organize an African Summit in early 2024 in Abuja, on the theme of "Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institution Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa," under the auspices of the President of Nigeria, and the United Nations Secretary-General.

As one of its possible outcomes, we have been exploring with Member States the idea of African-led strategic action groups, comprised of African members supported by the UN and other contributing partners that would help identify and agree on group and bilateral actions to be taken against the transcontinental terrorist networks I mentioned earlier.

Degrading these networks would help isolate them and make it easier for counter-terrorism efforts organized at the sub-regional effort to defeat these groups in detail.

These groups should complement and take advantage of all the other ongoing efforts in Africa, including those of the UN's own 45-member Global CT Coordination Compact, the GCTF co-chaired by Egypt and the EU, its inspired institutions, the Global Coalition's Africa Focus Group, and of course those of bilateral and regional bodies, including the African Union. For its part, UNOCT will continue to make available our technical assistance and capacity-building programmes we lead, including major multi-agency efforts.

Excellencies,

Stemming the increasing terrorist threat demands a more robust collective response.

UNOCT looks forward to its continuing cooperation with the African Union and with African States. Let us work together to strengthen multilateral collaboration and confront transnational terrorist threats that are more persistent, diverse, and complex than ever.

Thank you.