10th Coordination Committee meeting of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact

"Strategic Coordination of Counter-Terrorism Initiatives in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities."

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HUMAN RIGHTS AS THE FOUNDATION OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC COORDINATION IN COUNTER-TERRORISM

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Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Thank you, USG Voronkov.

Excellencies, colleagues and friends.

It is an important moment to come together again to discuss these essential issues and bringing all the components as we have already heard.

Obviously, the state of the world today is a sombre one when we take stock of the spread of terrorism and the interlocking threats of conflict, armed conflict and persistent violence all together.

So when we forge solutions to advance peace, we should come back to the very basis – the Charter of the United Nations – that can guide our way forward. One of the cornerstones of the Charter is the intertwining nature of peace and human rights. Both in the preamble and article 55, it is recognized that universal respect for human rights are preconditions for stability and peace.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy espouses this holistic approach with the four pillars, one of which is ensuring the respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact – with now 47 United Nations entities – is an existing coordination structure that can be utilized to realize these goals.

Briefly, there are three starting points that could contribute to this.

<u>First</u>, at its very core, strategic coordination seeks to **align diverse entities towards a common and inclusive goal**. Counter-terrorism efforts to bring peace and security cannot be reached without the respect for human rights. And that alignment is essential.

While the need to combat terrorism is unquestionable, OHCHR's experience in Africa, as well as globally, has shown that solely militarized or securitized counter-terrorism responses do not foster durable peace and stability, and actually could further fuel grievances as several speakers have already noted.

For example, such commitments require to be accompanied by compliance support measures, to assist peace and security actors in the planning and conduct of operations. OHCHR has been directly engaged in developing them and developed our expertise on this. The African Union has demonstrated its commitment by progressing in the development and further operationalization of its African Union Compliance Framework and we are privileged to be a partner in this endeavour. Recognition of this need is also growing, as shown by the recent UN Security Council resolution that was mentioned by the Secretary-General and Ambassador Kimani, on African Union Peace Support Operations where this element clearly comes in.

Second, violence and terrorism in Africa, and globally as well, are deeply intertwined – with all the complexities of the background as Ambassador Kimani pointed to – intertwined by poor governance, unresolved conflicts, exclusion and fragmented human rights protection. The UN's renewed focus on conflict prevention and peace sustaining emphasizes innovative approaches aimed at preventing resurgence of violence and terrorism. OHCHR has identified recurrent components of good practices and lessons learned on UN human rights-compliant programming. One such lesson is that **the first line of defence against violence and conflict should be an examination of the root causes, promotion of the rule of law and respect for human rights**.

Third, strategic coordination demands – and many of you have pointed to this – an **inclusive and collaborative approach, and that comes to the concrete proposals going ahead as well**. It means the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society and affected communities. Some recommendations we would propose for the Compact's consideration include: 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, and that also in order to enhance their participation that is very much needed.

Coordination should also extend to both national and regional levels and in fact making sure that they are linked up at the same time, horizontally and vertically. One of the main lessons learned in OHCHR's work with the G5 Sahel Joint Force is the importance of simultaneous implementation of the compliance framework at national, sub-regional and regional levels. This is crucial for addressing all the sub-regional challenges and enhancing communication and coordination between investigation units, provost units and detachments.

In conclusion, the threat of terrorism unfortunately looms large still. Having a unified, coordinated UN approach linked up to regional and sub-regional initiatives around these key aspects, would contribute to the overall success of UN action on counter-terrorism, hand-in-hand with the African Union in counter-terrorism.

Thank you very much.