



Remarks of the UNODC Executive Director

8th Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Committee Meeting: Strengthening international and regional cooperation to address the increasing terrorist threat in Africa

(Please check against delivery)

Wednesday, 8 June 2022, 10am NY time

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

It is an honour to join this distinguished panel to discuss how we can better protect Africa from growing terrorist threats.

Africa is a continent of immense assets and vast potential. More than half of Africa's population is under 25, a youth surge that represents Africa's greatest promise and its most critical vulnerability.

If we can invest in Africa's youth, we can help Africa unleash economic growth, innovation, and global progress.

If we fail to protect this precious resource, the demographic dividend can become a demographic burden, putting social systems under pressure and potentially increasing risks to security, stability, and the rule of law.

Terrorist groups exploit the frustration, the marginalization, and the lack of opportunities for youth to radicalize and recruit, and a growing digital space is providing new opportunities for their operations.

This poses one of the most acute threats to Africa's youth and its future peace and prosperity.

Africa remains the region most affected by terrorism, according to the UN Sanctions Monitoring Team, and it is where terrorists have claimed the most victims, as the SG has said 48 per cent of the global deaths occurred in Africa last year.

Terrorism drives regional instability and spoils sustainable development. Terrorists have been emboldened by global developments. Groups, including Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates in Africa, are expanding into areas riven by conflict, and they are threatening new areas previously unscathed by terrorist violence, as have just heard from USG Voronkov.

Foreign terrorist fighters continue to pose severe challenges to the stability of many African countries, as they return to their countries of origin or relocate to other destinations.

Greater support from the international community is needed. This support must prioritize prevention and more inclusively engage women and youth to build community resilience.

Furthermore, we must target linkages with organized crime and drug trafficking; challenges posed by FTFs and issues of prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration; measures to counter terrorism financing, money laundering and corruption; and evidence collection from the battlefield and digital spaces.

Working together, we need to further strengthen legislative assistance as well as capacity building to enhance criminal justice responses, and enable cross-border law enforcement and judicial cooperation, including through biometrics systems, watchlists, and databases, while respecting human rights.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime is working with partners to assist African countries in promoting such counter-terrorism responses. In 2021, we implemented 25 projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, delivering more than 160 activities and training over 2,500 people.

To support the Sahel in dealing with a new wave of violent terrorist attacks, UNODC is working with countries in the region to enhance the technical capacities of their specialized judicial and investigative entities.

We have been working with Nigeria since 2013, strengthening investigation, prosecution, and due process in terrorism cases, especially in the northeast where Boko Haram is active.

We have been working with Mozambique since 2019, both in Maputo and in Cabo Delgado where terrorists have tried to seize territory, to train and equip investigators, prosecutors and judges, as well as defence and intelligence officials. I am pleased to note that Mozambique has recently established a new inter-agency counter-terrorism unit.

We are networking counter-terrorism responses through support for the establishment of the Multi-Agency Task Force for the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the Judicial Cooperation Platform for Sahel Countries, which to date has facilitated more than 90 mutual legal assistance requests and 15 extradition procedures.

Looking ahead, UNODC will soon be launching a new Global Programme to Prevent and Counter Terrorism.

In line with our Strategic Vision for Africa 2030, and based on extensive consultations with Member States, regional organizations, UN entities, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector, the Programme aims to contribute to the implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy through three outcomes.

Firstly, by stepping up Member States' accession and implementation of the international legal framework against terrorism.

Secondly, by strengthening terrorism prevention measures, with the active and equal participation of women and girls as well as young people in community-based solutions, and to expand our work with civil society.

Finally, by fostering accountable criminal justice institutions that uphold human rights and have the capacities to engage in effective cross-border cooperation.

UNODC is committed to building on the results we have achieved with you, and to work with all our partners to advance inclusive, people-centred responses to the ever-evolving and interlinked challenges posed by terrorism, crime, and corruption, in Africa and beyond.

Thank you.