

**Statement for ASG Pobee's participation in the tenth meeting of
the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination
Committee on "*Strategic Coordination of Counter-Terrorism
Initiatives in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*"**

24 January 2024

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

I commend OCT and the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Committee for convening this timely meeting on challenges and opportunities for strategic coordination of counter-terrorism initiatives in Africa.

A recent article by the Chatham House indicates that in 2023, "sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 48 percent of global deaths from terrorism, with attacks spreading beyond the historical hotspots such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa to Southern Africa and the coastal countries of West Africa". The statistics is worrying, as is the fact that several factors such as the absence of state presence and high youth unemployment are creating an ideal breeding ground for terrorist recruitments, thus further contributing to this scourge.

Regional cooperation remains crucial for combating the evolving threats of terrorism in Africa and I welcome various initiatives taken in this respect. This includes the: (i) African Union's Continental Counter-Terrorism Early Warning System in the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism based in Algeria, (ii) ongoing efforts by ECOWAS to activate its Standby Force in its kinetic mode for counter-terrorism operations, as well as its appointment of a Special Envoy on counterterrorism, (iii) IGAD's Centre of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, and (iv) SADC's Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre in Tanzania.

The counter-terrorism work of regional mechanisms such as the

Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin, and the Accra Initiative and its Multinational Joint Task Force, are equally worth noting. However, more remains to be done, including as it relates to coordinating on counter-terrorism efforts in Africa. I end by highlighting four recommendations in this respect:

First, we should advance coordinated political solutions that place the needs of the people most affected by terrorism at the centre. As the Sahel example has shown, diverging political interests (internal and external) tend to inform the ways in which counter-terrorism actions are negotiated and implemented.

Second, there is a need for coordination on military, humanitarian, governance and development responses and actions in CT efforts. Currently, the focus is on military and security-focused responses that on their own have time and again proven their limits.

Third, we should leverage on key opportunities to strengthen integrated UN approach and support to African-led efforts to counter-terrorism. For instance, through support for the review and implementation of existing regional frameworks, such as the AU's Declaration on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa; and the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of Boko Haram affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin, which is being 'adjusted' for another five-year period.

Lastly, facilitate and support capacity building, including through south-south cooperation, for military and security actors engaged in kinetic CT operations on respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. Good practices from other non-military actors should also be promoted, such as Morocco's training of imams and Mauritania's "Mourchidates" network of women religious leaders who provide alternative religious discourse to violent extremism in their communities.

Thank you for your attention.