

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

**Ministerial-level meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on
“Strengthening the efforts of regional organizations to prevent and combat terrorism, violent
extremism and radicalization”**

23 September 2022

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

Your Excellency, Ms. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana, and Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union,

Your Excellency, Mr. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union,

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to address such a distinguished group of delegates on a topic that is of great importance to my Office. This meeting is of particular significance against the backdrop of the general debate of the General Assembly in which many Heads of State and Government from around the world express concern over the terrorist threat in parts of Africa.

Africa is increasingly the new frontline in the global struggle against terrorism and violent extremism, which was the rationale for the AU Summit that was convened in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

According to the African Centre for the Study and Research of Terrorism, the number of deaths attributed to terrorism in the continent in the first half of 2022 has risen by 40 per cent.

This suggests that terrorism is becoming increasingly lethal, particularly in conflict zones.

More than 5,400 lives were lost in those attacks, 65 per cent of whom were civilians.

The Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, organized by my Office earlier this month, highlighted the devastating impact of such fatalities, reaching far beyond those who lose their lives or limbs in these heinous attacks.

Excellencies,

Terrorists exploit conflict, governance fragilities and inequality, and undermine public confidence and trust in institutions. This contributes to expanding their influence and control, and to driving recruitment, making new attacks more likely.

Violent conflict remains a major driver of terrorism. In some contexts, the challenge is compounded by symbiotic relationships between terrorists, armed groups and transnational criminal networks.

Yet, as terrorism continues to evolve, it also increasingly affects societies that had until recently been largely spared from that type of violence.

According to the United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, terrorist groups such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida have in recent months continued to expand their activity in Africa. These groups and their affiliates have expanded operations from Uganda into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, increased attacks in northern Mozambique and extended their control in parts of the Gulf of Guinea.

Excellencies,

Despite this rather bleak picture, we should not forget that important progress has been made to counter terrorism in Africa both by Member States, and regional organizations.

Member States have inflicted significant losses on terrorist groups, affecting most notably the leaders of Da'esh in February and Al-Qaida in July. These leadership losses have undermined organizational and operational capacity of these groups, including in Libya and Mozambique.

African regional organizations have also contributed to effective measures to counter terrorism as evident in the initiatives undertaken by the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), the Multinational Joint Task force in the Lake Chad Basin, and the G5 Sahel.

I would like to recall an important outcome of the AU Summit in Malabo; a 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.”

Progress in this regard at the regional level, would result in more effective counter terrorism measures at the national level.

Stepping up cooperation and partnership with African regional organizations, including the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a strategic priority of my Office.

To this end, our Programme Offices in Nairobi and Rabat are initiatives that can facilitate regional capacity-building as well as cooperation. This is one important step towards enhancing our strategic engagement with African Member States.

Excellencies,

Terrorism must be met with resolve by all actors. But prevention remains one of the most important tools against terrorism. Addressing its deep and multi-faceted drivers yield more impactful and long-lasting results. Military operations or security-centred responses alone are insufficient in the fight against terrorism.

My Office remains fully committed to working with you, as we continue to enhance our cooperation with the African Union in support of national and regional counter-terrorism efforts. This cooperation includes the United Nations-African Union Working Group on Countering Terrorism and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, and our engagement with the African Centre for the Study and Research of Terrorism.

Finally, my Office is organizing with the Government of Nigeria and other partners a High-Level African Counter-Terrorism Summit on the theme “Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institutional Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa,” in Abuja in October 2023.

The Summit is a part of our efforts to mobilize more international support for African States affected by terrorism and violent extremism, and to reverse the worrying terrorist trend through enhanced multilateral cooperation.

I look forward to your engagement in the preparatory process of the Summit. This preparatory process is crucial for the success of the Summit.

We must not allow terrorism to undermine the great progress that is being made on the continent. Let us work together to achieve the goals of AU Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Thank you.