



Press Release

High-Level Parliamentary Conference in Togo addresses Youth Engagement in Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism in Africa

Lomé (Togo), 19 January 2023 – A high-level parliamentary conference on Youth Engagement in Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism in Africa concluded in Togo today.

The one day conference was organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement, in cooperation with the National Assembly of the Togolese Republic, the African Parliamentary Union (APU), the Interparliamentary Committee of the G5 Sahel (CIP G5 Sahel), and the Shura Council of the State of Qatar.

More than two hundred participants, including parliamentarians and representatives of parliamentary assemblies, United Nations entities, Civil Society and academia attended the event in person and online to discuss avenues for enhancing youth engagement in policymaking and legislative processes on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism (PVE).

The Conference began with opening remarks from the organizers.

“Youth are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but also the drivers of change today, and Young Parliamentarians present with us here now are the embodiment of this,” Mr. Mauro Miedico, Deputy Director, Chief of UNOCT’s Special Projects and Innovation Branch highlighted in his opening remarks.

H.E. Ms. Yawa Djigbodi Tsegan, President of the National Assembly of Togo, stressed that “We must convert young people’s energy into a shield that will protect our countries and values.”

H.E. Ms. Mabel M. Chinomona, President of APU and President of the Senate of Zimbabwe, underlined that “To a large extent, young people are the first victims of terrorism and violent extremism as they are the main targets of terrorists who deprive them of their bright futures.”

Mr. Norbert Tankoano, Executive Secretary of CIP G5 Sahel reiterated that “In order to be at ease, we must support and educate young people on parliamentarian issues and on countering terrorism and violent extremism.”

Hon. Mr. Saad bin Ahmed Al-Mesned, Member of the Shura Council of the State of Qatar thanked the UN for its efforts in countering terrorism. “We want to encourage initiatives that contribute to national and international endeavours to combat terrorism and build peace in Africa and the world, he added”

In his keynote address, H.E. Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal emphasized that “It is essential to engage young



people in politics, otherwise they will not feel represented and will not believe in democracy, leading them to accept extremist ideologies.”

The opening segment was followed by three interactive sessions in which parliamentarians and youth representatives exchanged views on current challenges hindering the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making forums and developed recommendations on how to better integrate their voices in policy-making and legislative processes at the local, regional, and national level.

Today’s conference was held in follow up to the high-level parliamentary conference on “Understanding the terrorist threat in Africa: new challenges and necessary measures” organized by UNOCT and in cooperation with the African Parliamentary Union (APU) and the Shura Council of the State of Qatar in March 2022, which recognized to need to increase platforms for dialogue between parliamentarians and youth.

In recent years, violent extremist groups throughout the world have consistently targeted young people for the purpose of recruitment and the execution of terrorist activities. At the same time, youth engagement is crucial if counter-terrorism and PVE-policies, programming, and capacity-building efforts are to succeed. The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its review resolutions note the important and positive contribution of young people in this regard.

Through their law-making, policy-setting, budget allocation, and government oversight functions, parliaments also play a critical role in preventing and countering terrorism and addressing the underlying spread of violent extremism. [UNOCT’s Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement](#) in Doha serves as a global hub to support and build the capacity of parliamentarians worldwide in their efforts to counter terrorism, through innovation and by leveraging partnerships with parliamentary assemblies, United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, regional and international organizations, academia, and civil society.

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