



**WORKSHOP ON  
BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE AREA OF COUNTERTERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA  
IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY**

**17 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF DENMARK TO THE EUROPEAN UNION  
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**SUMMARY AND PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

On 17 September 2009, the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (Center) with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark organized a full day meeting on “Building Capacity in the Area of Counterterrorism in West Africa in the Framework of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.” The meeting was held at the Permanent Representation of Denmark to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium and included representatives from the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission as well as other relevant regional and subregional organizations. The meeting served as a preparatory meeting to build support for the larger, follow-on workshop, which will be convened in West Africa in early 2010 and will include representatives from ECOWAS member states, external partner governments, and nongovernmental experts.

The participants at the workshop in Brussels focused on counterterrorism and broader related capacity-building efforts in a subregional context and considered the potential opportunities the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy offers for, among other things, improving the assessments of needs, enhancing cooperation in the subregion and its overall preparedness to combat terrorism, as well as stimulating more coherent and effective engagement by the United Nations in the subregion on issues related to terrorism and counterterrorism. Discussions focused in particular on the possibility of developing a subregional strategy on counterterrorism and a mechanism for facilitating improved subregional counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building. Participants also reflected on the experiences of other subregions and what lessons those may offer for West Africa. The meeting provided an opportunity for an initial discussion of issues surrounding counterterrorism capacity building and cooperation in the framework of the UN Strategy, including an initial assessment of capacity-building and coordination gaps that need to be filled to enhance implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The opening presentation at the meeting provided a useful contextual framework for the participants to build upon over the course of the day. It was noted that the issue of terrorism and other transnational crimes are unfortunately increasingly salient threats in West Africa. The adoption of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in September 2006 was, however, a major step forward in securing a universal commitment to take “urgent action to prevent and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.” It was stressed that implementation of the Strategy in West Africa is crucial but that West African states have limited capacity to carry forward the commitments in that document. West Africa, it was argued, therefore needs strong subregional mechanisms that can help facilitate subregional cooperation and capacity-building activities.

The workshop was conducted under the Chatham House Rule, i.e., all of the discussion was not for attribution. The following summary highlights some of the key themes and preliminary

recommendations identified during the meeting. It is not an official or complete record of the proceedings and does not necessarily reflect the views of the meeting sponsors or participants.

### **Session I - Terrorism and Related Security Challenges in West Africa: Threats, Vulnerabilities, and Capacity Gaps**

This session discussed the nature of the terrorist threat in West Africa, its connections to other security threats in the subregion, and the primary vulnerabilities, principal capacity gaps, and shortcomings in national responses.

In considering the capacities within the subregion to deal with terrorism-related vulnerabilities, it was pointed out that the primary subregional mechanism for peace and security in West Africa, ECOWAS, was originally established to promote economic development and integration in the subregion. Over the course of the 1990s, however, conflicts and other security challenges, including civil wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and elsewhere, prompted ECOWAS to reorient itself and led to the development of a fairly robust peace and security program and subregional structures to deal with these issues.

Although ECOWAS has not devised a framework to address terrorism specifically, it was noted that the organization has adopted a series of instruments aimed at addressing a number of related security challenges confronting the subregion, including: 1) the 1999 Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, which is aimed at strengthening subregional cooperation in areas including “international terrorism”; 2) the January 2008 Conflict Prevention Framework; and 3) the 2009 ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime.

It was observed that, in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, many West African states were surprised by the proliferation of counterterrorism-specific initiatives and admittedly reluctant to embrace fully what was perceived to be a largely Western-imposed counterterrorism agenda when these states were confronted with so many other more pressing security challenges, including widespread civil conflict and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, among others. However, these same conditions of conflict and the availability of arms, participants noted, combined with a number of other factors to make the subregion particularly vulnerable to terrorism. These include its geographic position, which makes it a favored transit point for drugs on their way to Europe from Latin America; corrupt law enforcement agencies; growing radicalization among vulnerable youth populations; piracy and other criminality in the Bay of Guinea; insufficiently controlled territory; and unpatrolled and undemarcated borders.

In light of these vulnerabilities and troublesome recent developments, including al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb’s (AQIM’s) migration/expansion southward into the Sahel and recent clashes in Nigeria between government forces and the so-called Nigerian Taliban, West African states, it was stressed, now acknowledge that the threat is real and are becoming increasingly engaged on the issue.

In that context, participants highlighted some of ECOWAS’ more direct contributions to improving counterterrorism cooperation in the subregion, including the founding of the West African Police Chiefs Committee Organization (WAPCCO), which has had some modest success in facilitating the exchange of information among its members on potential terrorist, and other international criminal, activity. The WAPCCO secretariat, it was noted, was folded into the ECOWAS Commission’s recently created security division, which it was hoped would strengthen WAPCCO. It was suggested that WAPCCO would be further strengthened if, in addition to

police chiefs, it also included the heads of security services, which in many countries in the subregion are the primary actors in efforts to combat terrorism and related transnational criminal activity. Participants also highlighted the contributions of ECOWAS' Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA), which has worked to improve the capacity of countries in the subregion in anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CTF) and implement the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF's) global standards.

The next step, it was argued, is for the ECOWAS subregion to develop its own strategy to address squarely the terrorist threat and consider what, if any, steps should be taken within ECOWAS to establish a mechanism for improving subregional cooperation and capacity. It was emphasized that any process towards the development of such a strategy and possible mechanism needs to be locally owned, take into account the context of the subregion, and must involve all relevant stakeholders, including states, relevant UN bodies, external partners/donors, and civil society. It was pointed out that the terrorist threat and measures needed to combat it encompass a wider geographic area than ECOWAS, including, for example some countries in the Sahel that are not members of ECOWAS. Therefore, some accommodation, it was suggested, might need to be found for the inclusion of non-ECOWAS states, such as Mauritania, in any eventual framework. The first step, it was suggested, is to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the threat and the priority capacity gaps across the subregion.

A recurring theme of the discussions emphasized the links between organized crime, drugs and arms trafficking, and terrorism in the subregion. Although some questioned whether there were any structural linkages between West African organized crime and terrorist groups operating in the subregion, there was agreement that the two do cooperate to their mutual benefit. West African organized crime groups were described as highly flexible, shallow in their hierarchy, project-based, easily adaptable, and incredibly difficult to investigate. It was pointed out that Latin American drug cartels are hiring the services of West African organized crime groups to move drugs through the subregion and that terrorist groups are benefiting from similar relationships of convenience.

Participants highlighted a number of shortcomings in the capacity of West African law enforcement agencies to effectively respond to this growing criminality, including corruption, the reactive (rather than proactive) nature of investigations; the lack of information sharing within and between security agencies (e.g. police and *gendarmes*) and among states in the subregion; insufficient funds for operations; lack of equipment; and an almost total lack of forensic capabilities.

There was some discussion of the UN's efforts to bolster the law enforcement capacity of countries in the subregion to deal with these issues, including through the provision of law enforcement training and equipment. Discussion focused in particular on the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC's) efforts to improve law enforcement cooperation in the subregion through integrated programs focused on individual countries. It was noted that UNODC has developed integrated programs for, among other countries, Mali and Sierra Leone, and is preparing ones for Togo and Niger, and is conducting field assessment missions for the remaining countries in the subregion. Of particular relevance, it was noted that UNODC recently joined forces with the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the UN Office for West Africa, and Interpol to launch the West Africa Coast Initiative (WACI), which is aimed at strengthening the national capacities of some of the subregion's most fragile states to implement ECOWAS' December 2008 action plan against drugs and organized crime. UNODC was commended for its integrated approach to these issues,

though some questioned why terrorism had not been included and some were critical of its failure to engage all relevant elements of ECOWAS in its project planning from the beginning.

During the discussion, a fair amount of attention was devoted to the issue of border control with a number of participants questioning whether or not efforts to secure borders in many parts of the subregion were futile. Some argued that rather than placing so much emphasis on the implementation of formal border security measures, the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and other relevant external actors should place more emphasis on strengthening cross-border cooperation among countries in the subregion. Others countered, however, that while it may not be realistic to control the entire length of borders, relatively modest investments in building capacity at entry/exit points, such as extending access to Interpol databases at those locations, can yield significant dividends. Others suggested that perhaps it made more sense to think in terms of “border management” and recommended focusing on how communities along borders can be enlisted to help prevent suspicious movements.

The fixation on border control, it was argued, is at least in part because donors see it as a priority and like funding it because it is something tangible. It was suggested that there needs to be more of a balance between external priorities and the interests of states in the subregion and that technical assistance should be guided more by the latter. It was suggested that a subregional mechanism, perhaps under the auspices of the ECOWAS, could help to better mediate between the interests of donors and the needs of states in the subregion.

Participants also highlighted what many saw as one of West Africa’s primary strengths: its vibrant civil society. Civil society, it was noted, is very strong in many West African countries, particularly when compared to other parts of Africa. It was emphasized that counterterrorism efforts should in no way limit civil society but rather build on and reinforce the important role that civil society has assumed in dealing with other peace and security issues in the subregion. Some suggested it was important to tap into youth organizations and women’s groups because of the important role that many of those have played in conflict resolution and peace building efforts in the subregion. Donor states and other external partners of the subregion were urged to emphasize the role of civil society and prioritize support for civil society engagement on counterterrorism.

ECOWAS, it was observed, has benefited significantly from the contributions of civil society and done a great deal to engage civil society in its work. It was noted, for example, that the initiative, and in fact the draft, for ECOWAS’s convention on small arms and light weapons came from civil society. It was also noted that the January 2008 ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework recognizes the important role that civil society plays in conflict prevention and provides guidelines for engagement. In addition to civil society, it was recommended that efforts be made to further engagement with the private sector, which can play an instrumental role in counterterrorism efforts and, in many cases, has a vested interest in those efforts.

### **Sessions II and III: Counterterrorism Cooperation and Capacity Building in West Africa**

During these sessions participants discussed the current level of counterterrorism cooperation and capacity-building activities in West Africa, paying particular attention to the work of ECOWAS, CTED, UNODC’s Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB), the African Union’s (AU’s) Africa Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT), and the European Union and how those efforts may be improved.

With respect to ECOWAS, it was noted again that the organization was established in 1975 for the purpose of promoting economic cooperation, integration, and development among its member states. However, starting in 1989, faced with a host of political crises, conflicts, and civil wars that undermined the political and economic stability of the subregion, ECOWAS' work expanded to include the promotion of subregional peace and security. In this regard, participants noted that the 1999 ECOWAS protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management resolution, peacekeeping, and security constitutes the legal framework for cooperation on peace, security, and crisis prevention in West Africa and includes mention of "international terrorism." This instrument has allowed for the establishment of a range of legal and structural tools related to various peace and security issues, including combating transnational criminal activity.

The point was reiterated that although ECOWAS' counterterrorism work has been limited to date, the rise in terrorist activity in the subregion and the threat that this poses to economic development in its member states has led to the growing recognition of the need for ECOWAS to focus more attention to this issue.

Participants highlighted how ECOWAS considers the exchange of information and other cooperation between and among its member states to be a priority for an efficient effort to combat not only terrorism but other transnational criminal activity. It was also noted that although the ECOWAS Commission has designated a counterterrorism focal point officer to follow up on, assess, and coordinate the organizations' counterterrorism activities, it is conscious that it needs to devote more attention to these matters and is eager for guidance on how to move forward to develop a more robust counterterrorism program. For example, it was noted that the Commission would welcome input on issues such as how to develop and implement ECOWAS counterterrorism instruments and how to harmonize them with existing ones covering other cross-border security issues.

Broadly speaking, it was mentioned that ECOWAS hopes to put in place counterterrorism instruments that are consistent with those that already exist at the continental and global levels and to play a complementary role in implementing the UN and AU counterterrorism instruments in West Africa. Among the initial ECOWAS priorities identified by the participants were: a) the development of a multidimensional counterterrorism office at the Commission and a subregional strategy and plan of action; b) the establishment of an operational network among the counterterrorism focal points of ECOWAS member states; and c) the creation of a subregional counterterrorism database that facilitates the sharing of terrorism-related names and other information among ECOWAS member states.

Participants also enumerated some of the completed or ongoing counterterrorism-related activities being undertaken at the subregional level by ECOWAS. These include the designation of an ECOWAS focal point to participate in CAERT's network of counterterrorism focal points and the organization of meetings of national counterterrorism focal points in West Africa. Participants emphasized the importance of deepening ECOWAS' involvement in counterterrorism issues, including by playing a more active role in promoting subregional cooperation and coordination in this field, much like it already does in other security-related areas.

It was emphasized that by assuming a more active counterterrorism role in the subregion ECOWAS might be able to a) provide or facilitate the provision of training opportunities and border control equipment to its member states; b) put in place coordination systems that allow for better cooperation both within the subregion and between the subregion and other regions and subregions, as well as the United Nations; and c) operationalize a subregional network of national counterterrorism focal points.

With respect to this last point, participants noted that rather than creating a whole new ECOWAS network of counterterrorism focal points, the ECOWAS Commission should link up with the existing CAERT national focal points. In addition, the point was made that with a new security division recently created within the ECOWAS Commission it should be easier for the Commission to convene national counterterrorism focal points, including for the purpose of presenting them with a draft subregional plan of action for their review and eventual adoption. Participants also noted that ECOWAS, with the support of a more active Commission in this area, could offer experts from member states in the subregion a platform to meet periodically to exchange best practices, build trust, and receive training and other forms of capacity-building assistance.

Turning to the work of CTED, participants commented favorably on its approach to capacity building that focuses more on identifying and helping to address common subregional needs and priorities rather than looking at countries individually. In addition to working with countries in West Africa to develop a subregion plan, CTED facilitated a CAERT workshop in June that focused on the training of law enforcement officials from countries in West Africa and has more subregional activities in the pipeline.

In addition to adopting more of a subregional rather than country-by-country approach to West Africa, CTED has narrowed the focus of its efforts to law enforcement and border control issues rather than trying to cover all aspects of Resolution 1373. Participants noted that this shift was triggered by a number of factors including the belief that this narrower focus will produce more tangible results, the fact that the capacity gaps in these two areas alone are significant, and that there are an increasing number of other organizations assessing the other elements of the resolution (e.g., GIABA's focus on AML/CFT issues) and the interest in avoiding duplication of effort.

To help improve the subregion's capacity to control its borders (which are often long and open) CTED has approached donors on behalf of countries in West Africa for border control equipment, but with little success. CTED, it was noted, has also emphasized improving the security of travel documents issued by countries in the subregion. In this context, the April 2009 training seminar on machine-readable travel documents that CTED organized in Abuja with the International Civil Aviation Organization was mentioned. Participants stressed how the lack of computerized national civil registries across West Africa negatively affects the ability of countries in the subregion to produce reliable travel documents. It was noted that among the recommendations that CTED routinely makes to countries in the subregion to enhance their border control capabilities are: to establish a reliable civil registry and extend the Interpol I-24/7 network beyond the National Central Bureau in capitals to all border checkpoints.

Participants also welcomed the close cooperation that CTED has developed with a number of regional and subregional organizations working in West Africa, including CAERT, ECOWAS, and GIABA, with all of them having participated in CTED visits to countries in the subregion and CTED participating in GIABA assessment missions.

The important capacity-building work that UNODC's TPB continues to carry out in West Africa received attention. It was noted that as a result of TPB's bilateral and subregional training activities involving national criminal justice officials, West African countries have made reasonable progress in ratifying the universal legal instruments against terrorism. The point was also made, however, that the subregion has progressed more slowly in drafting and adopting legislation necessary to implement these instruments at the national level.

Discussion focused on the regional and subregional workshops that TPB has organized for countries in West Africa, which have been useful for networking and trust building among experts in the different countries. It was noted that TPB, with the support of Spain, organized an event in June 2009 for ECOWAS countries in Las Palmas that focused on consolidating bilateral, regional, and international instruments on extradition and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters relating to terrorism. Among other things, the resulting declaration and plan of action recognized the importance of strengthening international cooperation to combat and prevent terrorism and related criminal activities. Participating West African states also committed to promoting “operational synergies leading to simultaneous progress in the fight against terrorism and transnational organized crime through the use of the existing legal instruments and improved judicial cooperation.” In addition the states requested UNODC to finalize the “‘Compendium of bilateral, regional, and international instruments on extradition and mutual legal assistance’ as soon as possible, with a view to its publication and wide distribution in the ECOWAS Member States.”

Participants noted that TPB has already completed a *“Compendium of bilateral, regional and international agreements on extradition and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters”* for criminal justice officials, judges, and prosecutors from Niger.

Some of the challenges TPB confronts in the subregion were highlighted. These include the fact that some countries are only just emerging from years of civil war or other conflicts and that there are a number of competing, if not more pressing, priorities than combating and preventing terrorism for many in the subregion.

Participants welcomed reports that UNODC will be pursuing a more integrated approach to its work in West Africa, with a subregional program being developed that pulls together a range of UNODC programs, including those being carried out by TPB, aimed at promoting the rule of law and human security in West Africa, and building efficient and sustainable national institutions. Integrated UNODC programs at the national level, which involve more outreach to local institutions, were identified as key elements of this program.

Participants also considered the efforts of the European Union, which has increasingly sought to engage the Sahel subregion on counterterrorism and is considering how to contribute to building the counterterrorism and related capacities of the Sahel and other countries in West Africa. It was noted that the European Union has proven very effective at deploying short-term counterterrorism-related assistance under its crisis instrument in areas such as Pakistan and Afghanistan.

A significant development in the EU’s ability to play a more effective role in countering terrorism over the longer term in West Africa, it was argued, is the inclusion of the Sahel as a priority in the 2009-2011 Indicative Programme for the Instrument of Stability. Participants were hopeful, therefore, that the European Union, and not just its individual member states, would be playing more significant role in building counterterrorism related capacities in West Africa going forward.

As a result of the increased counterterrorism-related capacity-building activities in the subregion, with an increasing number of external partners now interested in helping West Africa address the terrorist threat, participants highlighted the need for more coordination both among these partners and between them and countries in West Africa. It was suggested that the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force consider organizing a consultation on West Africa with CAERT and

other regional and subregional actors and external bilateral and multilateral partners. Among the objectives of such a meeting could be to identify the priorities and needs of the subregion across all four pillars of the UN Strategy and a division of labor among partners for working with countries in the subregion to address them.

#### **Session IV - Building Capacity and Cooperation to Combat and Prevent Terrorism in the IGAD Subregion: What Lessons for West Africa**

During this session participants considered lessons learned from East Africa and the establishment of IGAD's counterterrorism program, the IGAD Capacity Building Programme against Terrorism (ICPAT), which could be applied to West Africa.

In the development of ICPAT, one of the first issues was to determine the exact nature of the program. In the end, with the lack of trust among countries in the subregion, it was decided that ICPAT would be primarily a capacity-building effort working at the national and regional levels focused on the law enforcement and judicial cooperation and would not be involved in the much more sensitive fields of intelligence sharing and/or operational planning. The program now has five main components: enhancing judicial measures; optimizing interdepartmental cooperation; enhancing border control; training and sharing best practices; and promoting strategic cooperation among countries in the subregion.

Participants considered the merits of labeling the IGAD program as terrorism-related. The terms terrorism and counterterrorism have become heavily politicized as a result of the so-called "Global War on Terrorism" and its excesses and cause many to question whether it is an indigenous priority or one imposed from the outside. In the end, there was the sense that the substance of ICPAT's work and cooperation would have been much the same regardless of the label its work was given (e.g. counterterrorism or something broader like peace and security). There was the sense, however, that it would have been easier to accomplish that work without the politically divisive label.

The discussion emphasized the importance of the buy-in ICPAT had from all the relevant stakeholders. ICPAT, for example, includes on its steering committee the member states of IGAD as well as donor countries that provide support to it as nonvoting members. It was stressed that although ICPAT is first and foremost a program "of and for the subregion," it frequently functions as a bridge between states in the region and external partners, donors, and other experts. Although involvement by external donors has ensured the program has remained fully funded, it was noted that, because IGAD member states are not financially responsible for the entire program, there has been perhaps less than total ownership over all aspects of it by IGAD member states.

Participants also heard about a number of the challenges ICPAT has had to confront in building a subregional security program, not least of which is facilitating subregional cooperation among states which in some cases view one another as their primary security threats. It was noted that there is not a common perception of the terrorist threat in East Africa and, partly as a result, states in the subregion think primarily in terms of national as opposed to subregional security. ICPAT has also had to confront the fact that Eritrea has suspended its participation in the forum and the obvious problems with developing meaningful programs for Somalia, which has meant that the country with the greatest needs has benefited the least. Despite these challenges, it was emphasized that ICPAT has been able to facilitate important subregional cooperation on these difficult issues, particularly when dealing with officials at higher levels of government.

At the programmatic level, a number of issues were raised including diverging interests between donors and partner countries whereby local needs are often expressed in terms of material assistance (e.g., equipment) but donors are more interested in providing more general capacity-building assistance as well as the unevenness of donor support, both in its geographic and substantive focus. Other programmatic challenges cited include integrating human rights; ensuring a role for civil society; involving international partner institutions; considering which activities should be pursued at the subregional level, versus those that are better conducted on a bilateral basis; and determining the place of counterterrorism within the broader peace and security strategy for the subregion.

Among the accomplishments of ICPAT, participants cited its success in building a subregional community of security personnel; the development and implementation of more effective counterterrorism legislation; better awareness among judges and prosecutors of counterterrorism issues; improved interdepartmental cooperation and border security; better trained counterterrorism practitioners; improved respect for human rights; and increased subregional research capacity.

With its initial mandate ending in 2010, participants considered the future direction of ICPAT's work, which it was noted will be tied to the IGAD Peace and Security Strategy now under preparation. Going forward, it was emphasized that although the program should continue to focus on counterterrorism, that work will likely be anchored in a broader subregional security program addressing issues including piracy, Security Sector Reform, and transnational crime. Participants also considered what institutional form it should take, i.e. whether it should continue to be implemented by an external agency (currently the Institute for Security Studies), or if and how it should be integrated into the IGAD secretariat.

The participants considered the many lessons the ICPAT/IGAD experience offers in terms of developing an effective subregional counterterrorism program in West Africa. It was pointed out that importantly the initiative for the creation of ICPAT came from IGAD member states themselves, which were interested in improving implementation of the various UN and regional counterterrorism instruments in the IGAD subregion, and that it proceeded gradually from an initial threat assessment conducted in conjunction with an independent organization. That process, it was suggested, beginning with an initial subregional threat assessment, could be undertaken in West Africa.

In considering the lessons the ICPAT experience offers for the ECOWAS subregion, it was also noted that the subregional security architecture in ECOWAS is much more highly developed than in IGAD and should provide West Africa with a leg up as it begins to consider if and how to develop its own counterterrorism-related program.

### **Session V - Wrap-Up and Next Steps: Preliminary Conclusions and Recommendations**

During the last session individual participations put forward a number of preliminary conclusions and recommendations, many of which will be considered during the larger, follow-on workshop to be held in West Africa in early 2010. The conclusions and recommendations, which are not mutually exclusive, were addressed to countries in the subregion, regional and subregional bodies, and the United Nations and other external partners interested in enhancing counterterrorism cooperation and capacity-building within West Africa and stimulating more coherent and effective engagement by these partners in the subregion on issues related to terrorism and counterterrorism.

## **General**

- Counterterrorism capacity-building activities in West Africa should be framed in the context of a broader and more politically acceptable, human security paradigm; these activities should be integrated into programs aimed at improving governance and strengthening national capacities to address an array of cross-border criminal activities including, but not limited to, terrorism.
- To help build the operational links between counterterrorism and other security-related initiatives and development work there needs to be more engagement between the often distinct security and development communities.
- The UN Task Force and bilateral donors should encourage recipient countries to see counterterrorism capacity-building programs as part of broader development assistance efforts related to enhancing peace and security and good governance.

## **ECOWAS**

- ECOWAS should: a) adopt a subregional strategy and plan of action for addressing the terrorist threat in West Africa, which should be driven by local and subregional needs and priorities; b) establish a multidimensional counterterrorism office in the Commission; c) create an operational network among ECOWAS member state counterterrorism focal points, building on, rather than duplicating what already exists at the continental level with CAERT; d) create a subregional counterterrorism database that facilitates the sharing of terrorism-related names and other information among ECOWAS member states; and e) provide its member states a platform to facilitate counterterrorism cooperation and coordination among them and between the subregion and external partners such as the United Nations and for the delivery of subregional technical assistance and other capacity-building initiatives.
- These efforts should seek to build on and be framed within the context of existing ECOWAS structures and programs wherever possible.
- All relevant stakeholders, including CAERT, the United Nations and other external partners such as the United States and European Union, and civil society, should work together to support ECOWAS' efforts in these areas. Among the reasons for including donors in these discussions are to help ensure that a) any programs that are developed can be matched with necessary resources and b) that any new programs are not duplicating existing ones taking place outside of ECOWAS.
- Mauritania should be included in ECOWAS' programmatic activities related to combating and preventing terrorism in West Africa.

## **ECOWAS Member States and External Partner (i.e., Donors)**

- ECOWAS member states are in need of equipment and training in order to be able to combat and prevent terrorism effectively. For example, national police and security services need to receive the necessary counterterrorism training; in some instances specialized counterterrorism police units and magistrates may be needed.

- Attention should be paid to ensure that all countries in the subregion receive the necessary technical assistance, thus avoiding a situation where a handful of countries receive the lion's share of donor attention despite the *subregional* nature of the threat.
- More emphasis should be placed on developing creative approaches to helping countries in the subregion control their long and often unmanned borders. For example, this could include promoting community policing as an option for monitoring borders, rather than limiting the focus to providing technical assistance and often expensive equipment to help countries monitor the official land, sea, and air entry/crossing points.
- Donors should identify and fund concrete and sustainable capacity-building activities over which recipients feel a sense of ownership. The initiatives should be driven by the needs and priorities identified by local and subregional actors rather than imposed from the outside.
- Donors should employ a two-level approach to assessing and funding UN Strategy related activities in West Africa: one at the national level that identifies local priorities and gaps that need immediate attention; and the other at the subregional level, by focusing on multilateral activities that strengthen and sustain cooperation among ECOWAS member states.

### **The United Nations and Implementing the UN Strategy**

- Given all of the ongoing capacity-building and other counterterrorism-related activity now underway in West Africa, the UN Task Force should commission local experts to map the UN Strategy to see what is being done under the different pillars in West Africa and identify a) what programs are being implemented, b) where the gaps lie, c) where the UN Strategy intersects with other existing strategies in the subregion, *e.g.*, adopted by ECOWAS or the African Union, to address different security-related challenges.
- The UN Task Force should convene a meeting of regional and subregional organizations in order to share experiences, good practices, and lessons learned in developing regional and subregional counterterrorism strategies, action plans, and programs, and identify unnecessary duplication to support a more efficient division of labor among them. As a first step this could be done among European and East and West African organizations, including the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the African Union, ECOWAS, and ICPAT.
- The UN Task Force, in close cooperation with the UN Office on West Africa in Dakar, CAERT, and ECOWAS, should convene West African states both in New York and in the subregion to discuss their capacity needs across all four pillars of the UN Strategy. This initiative would build upon CTED's recent successful efforts to convene and develop a subregional plan of action for West African member states in the context of the implementation of Resolution 1373 (which is largely limited to Pillars II and III of the UN Strategy).

## **Civil Society**

- The UN Strategy provides a common framework for West African states, ECOWAS, and civil society to engage on counterterrorism issues and build on the rich contributions of civil society to furthering human security in West Africa.
- Given the importance of ensuring national and subregional ownership over the counterterrorism agenda in West Africa, more attention should be given to reaching out to and involving civil society in this area.
- Outreach to West African civil society groups should involve engagement with grassroots organizations, including youth and women's groups and with academic researchers and think tanks to develop locally-based, credible assessments of terrorism-related threats and vulnerabilities in the subregion. In addition, such engagement should build on the work West African civil society groups and networks are already doing to promote the rule of law, good governance, and peace and security, as well as the broader economic, social, and political development of the subregion.