



**WORKSHOP ON  
BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE AREA OF COUNTERTERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA  
IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY  
16-17 FEBRUARY 2010  
SHERATON  
ABUJA, NIGERIA**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**Overview**

This paper provides background for a meeting being co-hosted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission and the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation on “Building Capacity in the Area of Counterterrorism in West Africa<sup>1</sup> in the Framework of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy” to be held in Abuja on 16-17 February 2010. This meeting follows an earlier, smaller consultation in Brussels, which included the ECOWAS Commission’s Counterterrorism Focal Point Officer, the Head of the ECOWAS Commission’s Security Division, and the Director of the African Union’s African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), as well as representatives from the United Nations, other relevant multilateral organizations, and key partners countries and European Union member states. This second, larger meeting will include representatives from ECOWAS member states, other interested states, and nongovernmental experts as well.

The goal of this meeting, and the larger project of which it is a part, is to identify and prioritize the unmet counterterrorism and related capacity needs of countries in West Africa across the four pillars of the UN Strategy and strengthen counterterrorism-related cooperation among states in West Africa and between the region and the United Nations. The specific objectives of this workshop include a) considering the preliminary recommendations that emerged from the initial consultation; b) identifying concrete activities prioritized by participants from West Africa for follow-up capacity-building activities; and c) building support for strengthening subregional mechanisms for counterterrorism cooperation, including under the auspices of ECOWAS.

This paper discusses the significance of the UN Strategy for West Africa; some of the terrorism and related threats and vulnerabilities in the subregion; the efforts by ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and external partners such as the European Union and the United States to help the subregion address those threats and vulnerabilities; and ways in which those efforts may be improved. It concludes by outlining some of the key recommendations that emerged from the initial project consultation in Brussels.

Written as an overview, this paper is not intended to be comprehensive. It has been prepared to encourage discussion and outline preliminary recommendations for consideration by the workshop participants and should not be cited without permission from the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation and the ECOWAS Commission. Following the conclusion of the 16-17 February 2010 workshop, the Center will prepare and disseminate a final project report, which will contain a series of recommendations based on those discussions that will, among other things: a) analyze the challenges relevant to the implementation of the UN Strategy and more broadly to counterterrorism cooperation in West Africa; b) provide an overview of the Strategy-related capacity-building efforts of some of the key stakeholders in

the subregion, including both partner countries and institutions; and c) identify gaps in these efforts and concrete steps that a range of different stakeholders should take as follow-up, alone and/or in partnership with each other, to help fill those gaps.

This project is the sixth component of a broader effort by the Center to enhance implementation of the UN Strategy in different regions around the globe, which includes past projects on southern and East Africa as well as a concurrent assessment of North Africa. The goal of this effort is to help stimulate enhanced and more effective regional counterterrorism cooperation and complement ongoing efforts to implement the Strategy around the world.

The Center gratefully acknowledges the support of the government of Denmark for this project.

## **I. The Significance of the UN Strategy for West Africa**

Speaking before the United Nations Sixth Committee last fall, the Nigerian Ambassador to the United Nations stressed that “[a]s a global threat, terrorism requires a global and comprehensive response” and observed that the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly in September 2006 signified “the international community’s unity of purpose and commitment in this regard... by offering a comprehensive framework for a coherent international response to terrorism, [that] gives priority attention to addressing underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, such as poverty, prolonged unresolved conflicts, dehumanization of victims of terrorism, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization and lack of good governance... [and] emphasizes the imperative for respecting human rights and promoting the rule of law as a *sine qua non* to the successful combating of terrorism and the implementation of the Strategy.”<sup>2</sup>

Terrorism cannot be addressed through military force alone and requires a broad range of policy responses, including capacity building and broader development assistance to both strengthen state capacity to combat terrorism and address underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. As the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, stated on the occasion of the first review of the UN Strategy in September 2008, “[i]f international cooperation to assist developing countries in building up their resilience against terrorism is to be effective, we need to overcome a recurrent hesitation to combine the development and the security agendas. Including counter terrorism capacity building as an aspect of development programs is a delicate but nevertheless important task.”<sup>3</sup> Few places in the world is this connection between development and security clearer or the need for more effective development and counterterrorism capacity-building efforts more urgent than in West Africa, which suffers from deficiencies in governance, a lack of state capacity to address a range of interlinked security challenges, a history of intra- and interstate conflict, and segments of the population which are increasingly vulnerable to radicalization and terrorist recruitment.

The UN Strategy elaborates a broad range of counterterrorism measures, including measures to build state capacity and promote sustainable development, underpinned by the commitment to uphold the rule of law and human rights. As such, it offers countries in West Africa and the subregion as a whole the broad-based, long-term framework needed not only to thwart and respond to terrorist attacks, but to prevent local populations from turning to terrorist violence in the future and which may be among the greatest strategic challenges to counterterrorism efforts in the subregion. One of the UN Strategy’s primary achievements is its attempt to bridge the divide between the security interests of the global north and the development priorities of the global south, putting the need to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, including by improving the quality of governance, front and center. However, operationalizing this connection between security and development embodied in the UN Strategy and

translating what is a useful intellectual framework into coordinated capacity-building efforts on the ground will be challenging.

The Strategy's significance also lies in the fact that it reinforced the notion that while member states have primary responsibility to protect their citizens from terrorism and other security threats, an effective long-term counterterrorism plan requires a sustained multi-stakeholder approach. Thus, the Strategy highlights the role that the UN system, regional and subregional bodies, as well as civil society can play in working with states to implement the framework.

West Africa, however, lacks either a subregional counterterrorism framework or a mechanism for facilitating subregional capacity-building activities and cooperation in this area, which are key to translating the commitments made in the Strategy into practice. This project will explore the possibilities of West African states and partners interested in building counterterrorism capacities and cooperation across the subregion developing such frameworks and mechanisms, including possibly under the auspices of ECOWAS.

The UN Strategy is also the first UN counterterrorism instrument to recognize the role civil society can play in countering terrorism and contains specific language encouraging civil society to engage on its implementation. It therefore provides a common framework for states and civil society to engage on the issue. This is of particular significance for West Africa where civil society groups and networks have become increasingly active, often in collaboration with governments, in promoting the rule of law, good governance, and peace and security, as well as the broader social, economic, and political development of the subregion. Civil society, however, has yet to be integrated into efforts to enhance counterterrorism capacities and cooperation across the subregion.

## **II. Threats, Vulnerabilities, Challenges, and Capacities**

With the exception of countries in the Sahel and Nigeria and Senegal, West Africa confronts few obvious terrorist threats. However, the killings of four French tourists in Mauritania in early 2008, which led to the 2008 Lisbon-Dakar rally being cancelled “touched off alarm bells in security circles, raising the prospect of Islamic terrorist cells operating further south than before in Sub-Saharan Africa.”<sup>4</sup>

According to many observers, West Africa has a number of characteristics that make it increasingly vulnerable to terrorism and a potential breeding ground and safe haven for terrorists.<sup>5</sup> In addition to being a particularly underdeveloped region recovering from several prolonged conflicts, West Africa is both rich in natural resources and weak in terms of governance, and home to numerous ongoing ethnic, and religious conflicts. Its relative proximity by sea to Latin America and lax maritime security has made the Gulf of Guinea a favored transshipment point for Latin American-drug cartels seeking to do business in the European market. In addition to alarming levels of transnational crime, West Africa is home to increasing numbers of young, un- or underemployed men who are easy targets for those who seek to turn their resentment and despair towards violent and other illicit purposes.<sup>6</sup>

The security challenges along the subregion's northern frontier are particularly daunting and where the current terrorist threat is likely the greatest. Partly as a result of successful efforts by Algerian security forces, al-Qaida in the Maghreb (AQIM) has been pushed down towards the largely unpopulated area along the country's vast southern border. There, AQIM units operate, crossing porous borders between Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Algeria, and Chad “to recruit extremists within the region for training and terrorist operations in the Trans-Sahara and, possibly, for operations outside the region.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Abdel-Fatau Musah, a Senior Conflict Prevention Adviser to ECOWAS, the genuine grievances in the Tuareg community “have been adulterated with terrorism, trafficking in

humans, drugs, and cigarettes to transform the [vast, sparsely populated, and under-governed] northern parts of Niger and Mali into the most insecure zones of West Africa.”<sup>8</sup> Terrorist groups are not necessarily directly involved in the smuggling and other illicit activity, but rather benefit from it indirectly. For example, according to some, “the GSPC [the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which has since morphed into AQIM], has made an agreement with drug dealers and tobacco smugglers. The latter give money and fuel to the GSPC, which, in return, guarantees a right of passage, and even recommend[s] ways [for] them to escape from the region’s customs services and security forces.”<sup>9</sup>

Organized – and other forms of transnational – crime are a security concern across much of Africa, however, the connections between it and terrorism, and the threat this presents, are perhaps strongest in West Africa. In addition to AQIM activity in the Sahel and the increasing cooperation between drug traffickers and members of AQIM, according to Gani Yoroms of the Nigeria War College, “the illicit trade in diamonds and other precious commodities in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo is a source of fundraising for Hezbollah, al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations.”<sup>10</sup> Although the extent to which al-Qaida has profited from the illicit diamond trade in West Africa has been disputed,<sup>11</sup> it points to the vulnerabilities that exist in a subregion rich in natural resources and their illicit exploitation and trade.

Reasons why the subregion, which is among the least developed in the world, attracts criminal activity include the lack of functioning criminal justice systems in many parts of the subregion, which are highly vulnerable to corruption. For example, the police in many West African countries are rated as the most corrupt sector of society.<sup>12</sup> Law enforcement across West Africa is also hindered by 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. This lack of law enforcement capacity, coupled with widespread political instability and a general lack of state capacity to exert sufficient control over large swaths of territory and borders, leaves West Africa vulnerable to terrorist and other illicit activities. According to a senior UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) official, this has led to “West Africa becom[ing] a black hole where any kind of wanted person can come and operate or hide ... be they terrorists or other kinds of criminals.... It’s a criminal paradise.”<sup>13</sup>

Although ethnically, religiously, and politically-motivated violence and conflict, such as that which plagues the Niger River Delta, is prevalent in the subregion, according to Professor Eboe Hutchful, this violence is generally “viewed through the lens of ethnicity, identity politics, poverty, governance, and struggles over natural resources, rather than terrorism.”<sup>14</sup> This perception in part helps explain both why terrorism as such is generally not considered a top priority, either by governments or the public, particularly when compared to the other threats facing the subregion,<sup>15</sup> and why counterterrorism may be perceived as a form of racial, ethnic, or religious profiling in the ethnically and religiously diverse societies of West Africa.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the latter has already occurred in Nigeria, which has developed a robust response to the threat, but where a 2005 draft counterterrorism bill was withdrawn “due to opposition from northern Senators who argued that the motivation for such a bill was anti-Muslim sentiment.”<sup>17</sup>

The political discourse surrounding terrorism and counterterrorism in West Africa, as elsewhere on the continent, remains sensitive. Many continue to view terrorism as a predominately Western problem and counterterrorism a Western-imposed priority, and rightly argue that many more people in the subregion are directly affected by disease, crime, poverty, and hunger, than by terrorism. Yet, this fails to take into account the inexorable linkages between security and development that exist, perhaps nowhere more prominently than in West Africa. The subregion’s development agenda is made more difficult to realize so long as it remains vulnerable to terrorist recruitment, radicalization, and penetration. African leaders recognized “the destructive effects of terrorism, and the obstacle it poses to development and

stability on the African Continent” in the Dakar Declaration against Terrorism, adopted by the African Summit of October 2001.

There are significant linkages between counterterrorism and not only promoting good governance and other development goals, but efforts to address related security challenges such as drug and human trafficking, small arms and light weapons proliferation, and other illicit activities that are seen as higher priorities than terrorism by many in West Africa. The tendency, however, following September 2001 to treat counterterrorism as an exceptional response to an exceptional threat and the mushrooming of “counterterrorism” programs, often at the behest of the United States and often with a military or other security-related focus, has made operationalizing these linkages more difficult. This proliferation of “counterterrorism”-specific programs has complicated efforts to frame the terrorism and counterterrorism discourse in the context of issues that resonate more than “counterterrorism” in West Africa, for example, rule of law promotion, Security Sector Reform (SSR), criminal justice reform, conflict prevention, peace building, or combating drug and human trafficking. As result, it has made building public support for allocating scarce public resources to address the terrorist threat more challenging.

All of this also helps explain why the subregion has yet to formulate a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating terrorism despite its clear links to other cross-border criminal activities, which are increasingly seen as threats to peace, stability, and development and for which subregional strategies have been adopted at the highest levels (e.g., most recently the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime which ECOWAS heads of state adopted in June 2009).

Lacking a comprehensive subregional counterterrorism framework, it is not surprising that legal and other cross-border counterterrorism cooperation, including border monitoring and the sharing of intelligence and other information, remains inadequate across much of West Africa, despite the transnational nature of many of the terrorist threats.

However, in light of troublesome recent developments, including AQIM’s migration/expansion southward into the Sahel and clashes in Nigeria between government forces and the so-called Nigerian Taliban, West African states now acknowledge that the threat is real and are becoming increasingly engaged on the issue. A number of West African states have taken important steps in recent years to strengthen their capacities to prevent and combat terrorism. In addition, partners, including the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), UNODC, the African Union, the European Union, and the United States have provided technical and other counterterrorism capacity-building assistance to a number of countries in the subregion. Nevertheless, limitations at the institutional and operational levels to address not only terrorism but the related security challenges in West Africa remain significant. Many countries could still benefit from training for police, judges, and prosecutors; improving border control and monitoring unpatrolled coastlines; strengthening interdepartmental cooperation; upgrading communications equipment and facilities; detecting document forgery; and combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Most countries continue to lack counterterrorism legislation and, more broadly, an effective criminal justice system and other democratic institutions that are essential not only for combating terrorism, but crime and corruption, and for improving governance, dealing with internal and external conflicts, and improving the lives of those in vulnerable communities.

Among the goals of the 16-17 February meeting and the larger project of which it is a part is to work with local and subregional stakeholders, including ECOWAS, ECOWAS member states, and the African Union’s ACSRT to identify a set of priority capacity gaps that need to be addressed and what steps should be taken to fill them.

### **III. Subregional Responses**

The UN Strategy reinforces the important role that regional and subregional bodies can play in promoting counterterrorism cooperation and enhancing counterterrorism capacities and the need, in many cases, to strengthen the capabilities of those bodies to be able to contribute in these areas.<sup>18</sup> As the strongest of Africa's subregional bodies, ECOWAS, which has been identified by the CTED as one such body, has the potential to play a leading role in advancing Strategy implementation and improving counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building in West Africa.<sup>19</sup>

ECOWAS 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. Although ECOWAS has become a leader in conflict management and prevention issues, its current level of engagement in counterterrorism is limited. As with a number of other Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the reasons include the fact that terrorism falls relatively low on the list of priorities for many of its member states, which in turn has resulted in "no institutional structures or resources devoted specifically to fighting terrorism" and the absence of a subregional framework on counterterrorism.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the organization has adopted a series of instruments aimed at addressing a number of related security challenges confronting the subregion. These include: 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, which was adopted to help the subregion address the interlinked challenges of cross-border crime, small arms and light weapons proliferation, and political, security, and resource governance; and 3) the 2009 ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime.

Lacking a dedicated counterterrorism unit, the counterterrorism portfolio within the ECOWAS Commission is assigned to the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security. The most recent counterterrorism initiative undertaken by ECOWAS was to identify and invite counterterrorism focal points from ECOWAS' member states to inform the Commission about their counterterrorism activities, difficulties, and gaps. Armed with this information, the Commission is hoping to plan meetings for the establishment of an ECOWAS coordination network for the harmonization of all counterterrorism activities in the subregion. In addition, the ECOWAS Commission has continued to work with different partners, including the African Union's ACSRT, UNODC, and CTED, to further legal cooperation on terrorism matters in the subregion, which is particularly challenging given the differing legal traditions of ECOWAS member states.

Although ECOWAS' institutional contributions to counterterrorism as such have so far been limited, it has initiated subregional activities that do contribute to addressing the threat and to implementing the UN Strategy in the subregion. For example, it has developed an effective subregional mechanism to combat money laundering and terrorist financing based on a shared concern across much of West Africa of the need to protect banking and other financial systems from abuse. Established by ECOWAS in 1999, the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA) seeks "to provide a common framework for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorist activities and to promote cooperation between member states with different legal and financial systems."<sup>21</sup> Although no country in West Africa is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), as a FATF-style regional body, GIABA effectively expands the application of FATF standards, which are explicitly referred to in the Strategy, to the subregion and is working with ECOWAS member states to help them implement those standards and best practices.

In addition, ECOWAS' 15 member states are members of the West African Police Chiefs Committee Organization (WAPCCO), which facilitates the exchange of information among its members

on potential terrorist, and other international criminal, activity. With Interpol's subregional bureau (SRB) in Abidjan, WAPCCO has been able to develop and implement a series of practical counterterrorism-related programs. Interpol's SRB and WAPCCO have assisted countries in carrying out joint police operations on small arms and light weapons and on stolen vehicles, which were also aimed at assisting countries to combat and prevent terrorism and terrorism financing in the region.<sup>22</sup> They have also worked with UNODC to train magistrates across the region and familiarize them with Interpol's databases and communication tools.<sup>23</sup> With regard to the related issue of drug trafficking in the region, WAPCCO and Interpol are working together with other relevant partners to implement the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime and cooperate in the establishment of Transnational Crime Units in West African countries.<sup>24</sup>

Although these subregional activities are important, they are narrow in focus and do not adequately address the need for a subregional counterterrorism framework. The ECOWAS Commission has expressed an interest in developing a more robust counterterrorism program that complements and builds on the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union. Among some of initial priorities for the ECOWAS Commission are: 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.

Such an enhanced framework could serve to promote comprehensive national and subregional responses to the threat and enhanced cross-border cooperation, as well as a platform for helping to address the enormous capacity challenges facing most countries in the subregion, many of which are shared. 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 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 its subregional network of national counterterrorism focal points. 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. 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.

A first step could be for ECOWAS to undertake an assessment of the threat and vulnerabilities in West Africa. This assessment could be undertaken in cooperation with a West African think tank and highlight for ECOWAS member states the linkages between terrorism and a range of other security challenges confronting the subregion and how a more coherent response is needed to protect West African interests from terrorism. This could in turn also enhance the capacity of the subregion to confront other criminal activities that are seen as more pressing such as drug and human trafficking.

Such an assessment would need to confront the fact that the terrorist threat and the measures needed to combat it encompass a wider geographic area, which includes countries of the Sahel that are not members of ECOWAS. Therefore, it might be necessary to find some accommodation that would permit the inclusion of non-ECOWAS states, such as Mauritania, in any eventual framework.

With a sophisticated assessment in hand, one could then build support for the development of an ECOWAS strategy and plan of action aimed at addressing the threat and helping ECOWAS states implement it, with the support of external partners including, e.g., the United Nations, the European Union, the United States, and the African Union. 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.

The next step could be to seek external support to ensure that the ECOWAS Commission has the necessary human and financial resources to oversee implementation of this plan. If properly resourced, the ECOWAS Commission could serve as a more effective subregional partner for the United Nations as it continues to ramp up its counterterrorism activities in West Africa and as a platform for counterterrorism training and other related capacity-building activities in West Africa. In the end, however, as has proven the case with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and for similar reasons, efforts to ratchet up ECOWAS engagement on counterterrorism issues should proceed step by step, seeking to build and maintain political support from the critical stakeholders along the way.

Much as has been done in the context of the development of the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, the United Nations has a central role to play in helping West Africa develop and then implement any such comprehensive subregional counterterrorism plan. The UN Strategy, a document that all ECOWAS members signed onto when it was adopted by the General Assembly in September 2006, could form the basis of such a plan.

#### **IV. The Role of the African Union**

Before turning to the role of the United Nations in stimulating counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building in West Africa, the contributions of the African Union, in particular its ACSRT, deserve brief mention.

The ACSRT's mandate is to support national efforts to implement the AU counterterrorism framework, including by improving counterterrorism information sharing (e.g., sharing best practices and other national experiences) and cooperation and coordination among its members, the RECs, and the United Nations, with a view to raising awareness of terrorist threats across Africa and helping African states gain access to needed capacity-building assistance.

The ACSRT was envisaged as a highly integrated network of state and REC focal points coordinated centrally through Algiers, with each AU government setting up a counterterrorism coordination unit involving representatives from the relevant ministries and then appointing someone from that unit to liaise with the ACSRT in Algiers depending on the issue. Today, there are 42 national and seven regional focal points, of which some 25 met in June 2009 for the third time.<sup>25</sup> The ACSRT has also organized, with funding support from the United States, European governments, and Algeria, a number of training and other capacity-building activities for African officials, mostly related to enhancing capacity and cooperation in fields related to pillars II and III of UN Strategy, e.g., law enforcement capacity, critical infrastructure protection, force protection, combating the financing of terrorism, and terrorist use of the internet.<sup>26</sup> Some of these workshops focused specifically on West Africa.

In addition to the growing focal point network, the ACSRT is seeking to develop a confidential database which would include information submitted by the focal points on terrorist threats and trends, as well as names of terrorists and terrorist groups and sources of funding across the continent. This information would then be analyzed and cross-checked by ACSRT staff to determine whether it merits inclusion in the database.<sup>27</sup> The ACSRT is also developing a databank of African experts on terrorism so that AU members can more readily draw on expertise and experiences from other countries. Both databases are expected to be operational in 2010.

The ACSRT has augmented its activities in the past two years, partly as a result of increased donor support. However, it continues to suffer from a lack of human and financial resources, which limits its ability to make practical contributions to fulfilling its wide-ranging mandate. Although it has now succeeded in organizing a number of continental and subregional training seminars, it has had difficulty working with the national and subregional focal points in a sustained manner, and it remains to be seen whether it will be able to stimulate the practical expert-to-expert cooperation that is critical to building trust among countries in West Africa and elsewhere on the continent. Much like with UN counterterrorism actors based in New York and Vienna, the ACSRT needs committed subregional partners across Africa to carry out its work most effectively and efficiently, something that by most accounts remains elusive in West Africa.

Although designated as the focal point for counterterrorism activity within the African Union, there are a number of other parts of the organization in addition to the ACSRT that could play a significant role in furthering the implementation of the UN Strategy, particularly pillars I and IV, in West Africa and beyond. These include the AU Peace and Security Council, the Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise, the newly established African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development and its African Peer Review Mechanism. The Pan-African Parliament could also play a significant role in strengthening parliamentary oversight of legislation on terrorism issues. These African institutions, which are involved in issues related to efforts to reduce poverty and marginalization, improve governance, strengthen the rule of law, and combat corruption, are critical to ensuring that the Strategy is implemented in an integrated manner and need to be brought into the counterterrorism discussions in the African Union and surrounding the development of an ECOWAS plan of action for the implementation of the UN Strategy.

## **V. The Role of the United Nations**

With the vulnerabilities and capacity shortcomings in West African countries, a number of parts of the UN system have been actively promoting and supporting efforts to implement UN counterterrorism mandates, including the UN Strategy, in West Africa, with CTED and UNODC's Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) having been the most active to-date. Both have focused their efforts on enhancing national legislative frameworks and criminal justice and other law enforcement-related capacities, as well as trying to promote greater cross-border cooperation in terrorism-related matters.

### *CTED*

Particularly since the appointment of new CTED leadership in November 2007 and the adoption of a revised CTED organizational plan in early 2008, CTED's global efforts to facilitate the delivery of counterterrorism technical assistance related to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 have improved considerably, perhaps nowhere more so than in West Africa. For example, building on an initial meeting it organized in New York in July 2007, which brought together officials from West African countries and relevant bilateral and multilateral donors to discuss West Africa's counterterrorism technical assistance needs,<sup>28</sup> CTED arranged for the ACSRT to host a training workshop in June 2009 for law enforcement and other criminal justice officials from West African countries. In addition, CTED facilitated European Union funding for law enforcement and border control training for two countries in the Sahel and partnered with ICAO in April 2009 to organize a regional training course in West Africa on machine-readable travel documents. CTED has also developed close cooperative relationships with a number of regional and subregional organizations working in West Africa, including the ACSRT, ECOWAS, and GIABA.

CTED's New York-based staff has conducted country visits of different shapes and sizes to a number of countries in West Africa. During these country visits CTED leads a group of UN system

entities, occasionally joined by relevant regional or subregional bodies, to meet with a range of government officials and technical experts to discuss national implementation efforts. Such visits to West Africa, which have sometimes included representatives from the ACSRT, ECOWAS, and GIABA, have allowed CTED to gain a better understanding of the realities on the ground and work with the country concerned to identify the priority areas where work needs to be done and where technical assistance is needed. Among other things, CTED has used the opportunity of the visits to highlight the importance of having a mechanism in place at the national level that brings together and helps coordinate the work of a range of government agencies involved in counterterrorism strategy and implementation, beyond simply security and intelligence services.

CTED's approach to capacity building in West Africa has shifted to focus 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 subregional plan, CTED facilitated a ACSRT 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. 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 Resolution 1373 (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 CTED has approached donors on behalf of countries in West Africa for border control equipment, but with little success. CTED has also emphasized improving the security of travel documents issued by countries in the subregion, including by facilitating the April 2009 training seminar on machine-readable travel documents. Lack of computerized national civil registries across West Africa, however, negatively affect the ability of some countries in the subregion to produce reliable travel documents and CTED routinely recommends that countries in the subregion establish reliable civil registries and extend access to Interpol's critical I-24/7 network beyond the National Central Bureau in capitals to all border checkpoints.

Through increased engagement with officials in capitals and more strategic outreach, CTED has produced more concrete results under its new leadership. However, the impact of CTED's work in West Africa could be further enhanced if it placed its experts either in the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) or in the ECOWAS Commission. Such a transformation would improve CTED's follow-up capacities and enable it to interact more effectively with national experts and representatives from UN country and regional teams working on UN Strategy-related issues, particularly in nontraditional fields of counterterrorism, ECOWAS, and other relevant subregional actors, and civil society. This would allow CTED to take subregional and local cultural and political perspectives more fully into account, enabling it to gain a deeper understanding of the capacity needs of the subregion, and could create more opportunities to integrate the UN's counterterrorism activities into wider, and related, UN efforts in the subregion. Establishing a field presence in West Africa would require Security Council authorization, but regardless CTED should continue to find ways to deepen its cooperation with those other UN entities engaged in capacity building or other activities to promote stability in West Africa.

Given the linkages among the range of security challenges confronting the subregion, the need for holistic responses to be developed at the national and subregional levels, and the often limited absorption capacity that exists within West African governments when it comes to receiving technical assistance, an integrated UN approach in and to West Africa is essential. In this light, a recent positive development was CTED's first-ever participation in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission on Guinea-Bissau and

Sierra Leone (and Burundi). In a meeting organized by the Peacebuilding Commission, CTED discussed priorities for counterterrorism programs to be implemented in Sierra Leone with the support of the “Groups of Donors and Friends of Sierra Leone.” In addition, CTED provided input on counterterrorism issues in the context of the development of a Peacebuilding Strategic Framework for Guinea-Bissau; took part in the Inter Agency Group Assessment Mission for the Security Sector of Guinea-Bissau; and contributed analysis for the security sector support exercise for Sierra Leone.<sup>29</sup> More active CTED engagement, both in New York and in the field, with those parts of the United Nations engaged in trying to address some of the broader causes of instability in West Africa, with a view to better integrating the UN’s counterterrorism program into these wider efforts, should be encouraged.

### *UNODC*

Since the launch of its Global Project on Strengthening the Legal Regime against Terrorism in January 2003, UNODC, through its TPB, has delivered various forms of counterterrorism-related assistance aimed at helping countries join and implement the universal instruments against terrorism. This assistance has included legislative drafting aid and the training of criminal justice professionals. Drawing on its Vienna-based staff, its network of local consultants, and UNODC regional representatives based in Dakar, TPB has provided most ECOWAS members with technical assistance either bilaterally or in regional or subregional settings. As a result, it has provided dozens of national criminal justice officials from countries in West Africa with “specialized training on the legal regime against terrorism, especially the legal aspects and obligations arising from the universal legal instruments against terrorism and related Security Council resolutions and the mechanisms of international cooperation in criminal matters (extradition and mutual legal assistance).”<sup>30</sup> Partly as a result of this training, among ECOWAS members, the Gambia, Mali, Niger, and Senegal have adopted counterterrorism legislation.<sup>31</sup>

Although its bilateral training activities are important, TPB’s regional and subregional initiatives are particularly useful as they bring together criminal justice officials from across West Africa and allow for the cross-border networking, exchange of information, and building of trust which is essential to effectively combat terrorism in West Africa but which has proven slow to develop. With the support of Spain, TPB has organized workshops aimed at strengthening international cooperation in criminal matters relating to terrorism among states in West Africa, with the most recent one in Las Palmas in June 2009 focusing on consolidating bilateral, regional, and international instruments on extradition and mutual legal assistance. 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.” 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.

UNODC’s expertise extends to other terrorist-related issues, such as organized crime, terrorist financing, money laundering, and drugs and human trafficking. Although officials dealing with these different international crimes in many countries and the themes raised in many training sessions are often the same, too often UNODC provides training to criminal justice officials in under resourced countries on these issues separately rather than offering a unified program that better reflects the obvious links.

UNODC has grown increasingly aware of and responsive to this need, particularly in West Africa, where it has played a leading role in mobilizing the attention of the international community on

the threat posed by drug trafficking and related crimes in the subregion and in devising integrated programs to address these threats. For example, in April 2008 it convened an informal ministerial session in Vienna with a number of West African ministers to discuss the security situation in the subregion, with a special focus on the Sahel band, where among the needs identified for technical assistance were counter-narcotics, criminal justice reform, anti-corruption, border management, sharing of intelligence, terrorism prevention, and stopping the illicit trade in small arms.<sup>32</sup> Through its Operations Directorate, UNODC is providing, or will soon provide, technical assistance through integrated national training programs to a number of ECOWAS member states, including Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Sierra Leone.

In addition, UNODC recently joined forces with the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNOWA, 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, including Guinea Bissau, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire to implement the December 2008 action plan against drugs and organized crime. The initiative is part of growing cooperation among UN actors to address the threat posed by illicit drug trafficking and organized crime to the already fragile states of West Africa. One UN official explained that the initiative, which includes placing UN Police on the ground as mentors, will be "regionally coordinated, internationally mentored, but locally owned."<sup>33</sup>

This approach, which integrates the work being carried out by a number of different UN entities and is carried out in close cooperation with a subregional partner to help ensure local ownership, should be welcomed and may offer a best practice for maximizing UN synergies in building national capacities to address cross-cutting security issues elsewhere in West Africa and beyond. However, it appears that neither of the main UN counterterrorism actors, UNODC's TPB nor CTED, is included in this otherwise multidimensional UN program. This, despite the concern recently expressed by the Security Council over terrorist activities in the Sahel band<sup>34</sup> and the understood connections between them and drug trafficking and other illicit activities and the goal of promoting an integrated UN response to these interlinked threats. Starting within UNODC, more attention needs to be given to ensuring that UN counterterrorism capacity-building activity is incorporated into wider UN programs to build the capacities of criminal justice systems and other relevant national institutions to address a number of inter-related security challenges. This is particularly important in subregions such as West Africa where the absorption capacities of often weak national institutions to receive technical assistance are limited and "counterterrorism" is not necessarily a top national priority, despite the vulnerabilities to and threat from terrorism.

#### *UNDP*

Another area where strengthened programmatic linkages within the United Nations would contribute to more effective programs to enhance national and regional capacities to counter terrorism revolves around enhancing cooperation between the UN's development and counterterrorism actors.

One of the main achievements of the UN Strategy is that it emphasizes the link "between the traditional development agenda: poverty reduction, social development, rule-of law programmes and the fight against terrorism" and other transnational security challenges.<sup>35</sup> Key to making this connection in practice is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which, although it is not mentioned explicitly in the Strategy and lacks an explicit "counterterrorism" mandate, has a potentially significant role to play in promoting implementation of the Strategy.

UNDP contributes to addressing the underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism identified in pillar one of the Strategy through its core program work in the areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention/recovery, and the environment as well as HIV/AIDS, gender

equality, and human rights. For example, UNDP has worked with countries in the subregion to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, collaborated with ECOWAS, DPKO and other partners to help countries in the subregion emerge from conflict, and worked in conjunction with ECOWAS to help implement the Moratorium on the Importation and Manufacture of Small Arms.<sup>36</sup> Despite the relevance of its work to building counterterrorism-related capacity and addressing root causes of conflict and terrorism in the subregion, and the fact that it is a member of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, UNDP has been generally reluctant both at a policy level and at the practical level to associate its work or coordinate its efforts with UN or other counterterrorism actors for fear that doing so might unduly politicize its work on the ground. This fear was generated in part because of the way in which the Security Council, using its Chapter VII mandate, assumed control over the UN's counterterrorism agenda in the period following September 2001 and imposed obligations on all UN member states without any prior consultations. For many in the developing world, the UN effort was seen as an extension of the unpopular U.S.-led "global war on terror," which led to increasingly seeing all issues, including traditional development ones, through the counterterrorism prism.

The recent move away from the "global war on terror" rhetoric that dominated the post-September 2001 era, however, has opened up the space to begin a discussion on how to break down the walls that have been built between development and security actors, which would pay dividends for West Africa, where greater engagement from UNDP could potentially improve both the coordination of counterterrorism-related capacity-building efforts and subregional ownership of the Strategy.

UNDP's resident representatives, which are present in all West African countries, are generally also the UN resident coordinators responsible for promoting coherence among the different parts of the UN system operating in a particular country and could potentially coordinate in-country technical assistance programs and serve as focal points for in-country implementation efforts. To help build public support for and ownership of counterterrorism capacity building in the subregion, UNDP and other relevant UN actors could encourage national partners to treat such programs "as part of development assistance to 'peace and security' and 'good governance' and therefore as part of the national development plan of the country in question."<sup>37</sup> In doing so, this might help increase the likelihood that "counter terrorism is perceived as a national priority and that it is reflected in national policies and strategies."<sup>38</sup> A first practical step in this direction could be for UNDP to consult with relevant UN counterterrorism capacity-building actors such as UNODC's TPB and CTED to learn more about counterterrorism capacity needs and priorities as it works with local officials to develop national development plans and the UN Development Assistance Framework. In addition, in the context of enhancing coherence and efficiency at the country level and increasing joint UN activities, UNDP and other relevant UN actors, as well as donors, could include counterterrorism capacity-building projects among the projects that can be funded out of the "multi-donor trust funds" that UNDP is often called upon to administer.<sup>39</sup>

There is a need for the UN Secretary-General and West African member states to call on UNDP to become more engaged on these issues and for donors to reassure those that are concerned about the possible securitizing of development work, that the goal is for counterterrorism capacity-building efforts to be seen as part of a broader development agenda and not the other way around. The recent appointment of former New Zealand Prime Minister, Helen Clark, as the new UNDP Administrator, may offer an opportunity to explore ways in which to deepen UNDP's engagement on these issues.

#### *The UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force's Integrated Assistance on Counter-Terrorism Working Group*

One area where more active UNDP engagement is needed involves the Task Force's Integrated Assistance on Counter-Terrorism Working Group. This potentially important initiative brings together a

number of UN entities involved in Strategy-related capacity building with a view to offering a “one-window-approach” for countries interested in receiving UN assistance in implementing the Strategy. It is aimed at bringing greater coherence to ongoing UN efforts in this area, including by linking up the traditional UN counterterrorism actors (i.e., CTED and UNODC’s TPB) with those who engage in strengthening governance, reforming education curricula, and reducing poverty, all of which are critical elements of the UN Strategy and, more broadly, any effective counterterrorism strategy.

The working group has developed an automated information-exchange system that will compile all information submitted by Task Force members regarding their previous and ongoing work with the country at issue. It will also engage with bilateral and multilateral donors outside of the Task Force as it seeks to help the country concerned plug identified capacity gaps.

Active UNDP participation, both from the resident representatives in those countries which have approached the working group for assistance (Nigeria is one of two countries to have so far done this) and in terms of contributing the necessary information regarding its country-specific Strategy-related capacity-building initiatives will be needed to ensure a truly integrated UN response to the country concerned across all four pillars of the Strategy and one that is framed in terms of the country’s broader needs and priorities.

## **VI. The Role of U.S. and EU Counterterrorism Capacity Building in West Africa**

The countries of West Africa and the Sahel have attracted heightened interest from the United States and the European Union, which have both played increasingly significant roles in improving the counterterrorism capacity of the countries in the subregion and the subregion as a whole.

The European Union, which has “identified the risks presented by the Sahel as the second key terrorist threat to the EU,”<sup>40</sup> 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 countries. Among other things the European Union is considering a French proposal to establish “a regional security academy, with EU support... which will help these countries address the fundamental issue of improving their ability to secure their own territory, as well improve regional coordination by developing personal contact between the countries concerned and giving them a common basis of understanding of security issues.”<sup>41</sup> The European Union has also indicated its intention to support related efforts to implement the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime by “increasing operational capacities of ECOWAS, its Commission as well as ECOWAS Member States, and their deeper involvement in addressing [these illicit activities].”<sup>42</sup> More broadly, the European Union is formulating a common EU approach to “support the development and security policies in the Sahel region” to address underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and supported an exploratory mission to Mali, Niger, and Mauritania and a Sahel-Sahara regional conference on the nexus of security and development initiated by the President of Mali.<sup>43</sup>

A significant development in the EU’s ability to play a more effective role in building counterterrorism capacity in West Africa and elsewhere outside of Europe is the inclusion of the “first global counter-terrorism measures developed by the [European] Commission together with experts from EU member states in the 2009-2011 Indicative Programme for the Instrument of Stability.”<sup>44</sup> Although not including West Africa as such, the programme includes the Sahel region as among the key priorities. Given the prominent role that the UN’s CTED will play in helping the European Union identify priority needs under this programme,<sup>45</sup> it appears that Security Council Resolution 1373, will continue to be the focus of the EU’s efforts to support counterterrorism capacity building in third countries, even with the existence of the broader, more politically palatable UN Strategy.

The United States has also significantly increased its counterterrorism-related assistance to the subregion. In addition to narrow, bilateral counterterrorism capacity-building assistance that focuses on enhancing national law enforcement and other security-related capacities,<sup>46</sup> the United States has sought to facilitate horizontal security cooperation among the states of the Sahel and the wider subregion. The primary vehicle for that has been the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) which grew out of the more narrowly focused Pan-Sahel Initiative.<sup>47</sup> The goals of the TSCTP include “strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities; enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region’s security forces; promoting democratic governance; discrediting terrorist ideology; and reinforcing bilateral military ties with the United States.”<sup>48</sup> The TSCTP is a multiagency initiative ostensibly led by the U.S. State Department that includes a “combination of military-to-military security assistance and development programs that aim to reduce support for violent extremism.”<sup>49</sup> For example, as part of the TSCTP, the Department of State “has hosted educational programs intended to marginalize violent extremists; USAID supported efforts to improve education and health; and [the Department of Defense] has provided counterterrorism training in marksmanship and border patrol to the militaries of partner countries.”<sup>50</sup> Notably under the auspices of the TSCTP, the United States has had some success “in gathering around the same table a large number of officials from countries whose strategic and defence interests are incongruous, and to convince them to coordinate their antiterrorist operations.”<sup>51</sup>

Both the European Union and the United States have increasingly sought to engage the subregion in a manner that combines both hard and soft approaches to the threat and seeks to foster cooperation across the broader region. Some observers have argued, however, that the presence of the U.S. military, its support to authoritarian regimes, and joint military exercises with regional partners have served to stoke anti-Americanism and cynicism regarding U.S. motives and contributed to growing radicalization and separatist violence across Northwest Africa.<sup>52</sup> Moving forward, the UN Strategy may offer an alternative and more palatable framework for the United States and other external partners to provide counterterrorism-related assistance – a way to internationalize those efforts and avoid further stoking anti-Western sentiment – and a framework within which to better coordinate their assistance efforts with a view to ensuring that all the priority needs are getting addressed. As the European Union and other external actors continue to engage with countries in West Africa on counterterrorism, careful attention should be paid to ensure that this engagement cuts across all four pillars of the UN Strategy in a coherent and mutually reinforcing manner and that efforts are made to stimulate more horizontal cooperation (i.e., between and among countries in the subregion) in all aspects of the Strategy.

As is the case with the UN’s capacity-building work in the subregion, the European Union, the United States and other donors would benefit from the existence of a subregional framework in which to carry out these different activities and a subregional mechanism, including possibly under the auspices of ECOWAS, to help ensure sustained local ownership over them.

## **VII. Preliminary Recommendations for Consideration:**

The following recommendations are based on discussions held during the initial consultation of the project in Brussels in September 2009 and are presented for consideration by the workshop participants. They are 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. Their inclusion does not imply the endorsement of the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation or the ECOWAS Commission; they are for consideration by the workshop participants.

### **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 what already exists at the continental level with the ACSRT; 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 ACSRT, 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 Partners**

- 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 unpatrolled 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, ACSRT, 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.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the project, “West Africa” is defined as including the member states of ECOWAS (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote D’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo).

<sup>2</sup> Bukun-Olu Onemola, Ambassador/Deputy Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations, Statement at the United Nations Sixth Committee, New York, 7 October 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Ambassador Carsten Staur, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, Remarks on the Occasion of the First Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, September 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Pascal Fletcher, “INTERVIEW - W. Africa is Crime, Terrorism ‘Black Hole’-UN expert,” *Reuters*, 13 January 2008, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L13455450.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Gani Yoroms, “Counter-Terrorism Measures in West Africa,” in *Understanding Terrorism in Africa: Building Bridges and Overcoming the Gaps*, Wafula Okumu and Anneli Botha, eds., Institute for Security Studies, 2008 and Eboe Hutchful, “Economic Community of West African States Counterterrorism Efforts,” in *African Counterterrorism Cooperation: Assessing Regional and Sub-regional Initiatives*, Andre Le Sage, ed., (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press and Potomac Books; 2007).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Office for West Africa, “Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa,” 2006, [www.un.org/unowa/unowa/studies/yunemp-v2-en.pdf](http://www.un.org/unowa/unowa/studies/yunemp-v2-en.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Africa Overview,” *2007 Country Reports on Terrorism*, 30 April 2008, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103705.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Abdel-Fatau Musah, “West Africa: Governance and Security in a Changing Region,” Africa Program Working Papers Series, *International Peace Institute*, February 2009, p. 3. [http://www.ipacademy.org/asset/file/425/west\\_africa.pdf](http://www.ipacademy.org/asset/file/425/west_africa.pdf). In 2002. The remote and open reaches and loosely policed borders along the trans-Sahara region, coupled with the presence of tribal groups operating in the northern parts of Niger and Mali, began attracting attention from U.S. counter-terrorism officials concerned that it would become the “next Afghanistan,” i.e., “a safe haven where terrorists would train, test their weapons and organize attacks on the United States.” Nicholas Schmidle, “The Saharan Conundrum,” *New York Times*, 12 February 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/15/magazine/15Africa-t.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/15/magazine/15Africa-t.html?_r=1).

<sup>9</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Report, “Niger: Commentary Stresses Need to Combat Al-Qa’ida, GSPC Sahel Region Activity,” AFP20060528641010, Niamey L’Evenement, 23 May 2006. Commentary by Moussa Aksar, “Sahel Region under Al-Qa’ida Threat.” According to UNODC’s Deputy Regional Representative for West and Central Africa, “proceeds from cigarette smuggling are used to purchase weapons. The participation by local communities (and local authorities) in the smuggling activity is a guarantee of impunity for all participants in the smuggling venture.” Amado Philip de Andrés, “Organised Crime, Drug Trafficking, Terrorism: the New Achilles’ Heel of West Africa,” *Fride*, May 2008, [http://www.google.com/url?sa=U&start=1&q=http://www.fride.org/download/COM\\_Achilles\\_heel\\_eng\\_may08.pdf&ei=kxbMSch\\_NMzrlQf4uJ3WCQ&usg=AFQjCNHwNcknK9nSw3-Z\\_HnOdsM\\_DE3tSQ](http://www.google.com/url?sa=U&start=1&q=http://www.fride.org/download/COM_Achilles_heel_eng_may08.pdf&ei=kxbMSch_NMzrlQf4uJ3WCQ&usg=AFQjCNHwNcknK9nSw3-Z_HnOdsM_DE3tSQ).

<sup>10</sup> Gani Yoroms, “Counter-Terrorism Measures in West Africa,” in *Understanding Terrorism in Africa: Building Bridges and Overcoming the Gaps*, Wafula Okumu and Anneli Botha, eds., Institute for Security Studies, 2008, p. 91. See also, Andrews Atta-Asamoah, “Counter-Terrorism and the National Security of African States: Points of Convergence and Departure,” *Journal of Security Sector Management*, vol 6, no. 1, March 2008, p. 4, [http://www.ssronline.org/jofssm/issues/jofssm\\_0601\\_atta-asamoah.pdf?CFID=1392754&CFTOKEN=22425822](http://www.ssronline.org/jofssm/issues/jofssm_0601_atta-asamoah.pdf?CFID=1392754&CFTOKEN=22425822). However, the claims of al-Qaida fund-raising in West Africa have been refuted by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and later the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.

<sup>11</sup> For example the 9/11 Commission in its final report concluded that it had “seen no persuasive evidence that al Qaida funded itself by trading in African conflict diamonds.” *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, July 2004, p. 171. Intelligence and law enforcement officials continue to disagree over the veracity of those claims. See, e.g., Dennis Lormel, “I Thought Diamonds Were Supposed to be Clear? Then Why Are They so Grey?” *Counterterrorism Blog*, 30 August 2005, [http://counterterrorismblog.org/2005/08/i\\_thought\\_diamonds\\_were\\_suppos.php](http://counterterrorismblog.org/2005/08/i_thought_diamonds_were_suppos.php).

<sup>12</sup> “Organized Crime Plundering West Africa, Says UNODC Report,” UNODC, 7 July 2009, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2009/July/organized-crime-plundering-west-africa-says-unodc-report.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Pascal Fletcher, “Interview-W. Africa is Crime, Terrorism ‘Black Hole’-UN expert,” *Reuters*, 13 January 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/africaCrisis/idUSL13455450>.

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- <sup>14</sup> Eboe Hutchful, “Economic Community of West African States Counterterrorism Efforts,” in *African Counterterrorism Cooperation: Assessing Regional and Sub-regional Initiatives*, Andre Le Sage, ed., (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press and Potomac Books; 2007), p. 114.
- <sup>15</sup> Shastry Njeru, “Africa: Post 9/11 Aid, Security Agenda and the African State,” *Pambazuka News*, 4 September 2008, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200809050414.html>.
- <sup>16</sup> Eboe Hutchful, “Economic Community of West African States Counterterrorism Efforts,” in Andre Le Sage ed., *African Counterterrorism Cooperation*, (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press and Potomac Books; 2007), p. 116.
- <sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Africa Overview,” *2007 Country Reports on Terrorism*, 30 April 2008, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2007/103705.htm>.
- <sup>18</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/288, A/RES/60/288, New York, 8 September 2006, Section II, paragraph 8.
- <sup>19</sup> Interviews with CTED staff in New York, February and March 2009.
- <sup>20</sup> Eboe Hutchful, “Economic Community of West African States Counterterrorism Efforts,” in Andre Le Sage (ed.), *African Counterterrorism Cooperation*, (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press and Potomac Books; 2007), p. 120.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Email correspondence with Interpol Headquarters, 12 February 2009.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> The Transnational Crime Units program envisions international experts working alongside nationals in a teaching, advising, and mentoring capacity to ensure sustainability in the region and a comprehensive and cohesive approach to transnational crime issues.
- <sup>25</sup> Only eight of 15 ECOWAS member state focal points, as well as the ECOWAS Commission, participated.
- <sup>26</sup> “The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) Activities – January-December 2008,” March 2009 [copy on file with authors].
- <sup>27</sup> The European Union has provided ACSRT with one million Euros to establish the database, to which the focal points will have access.
- <sup>28</sup> This resulted in identifying common technical assistance needs for West African member states in the fields of “legal, financial law and practice, law enforcement, and border control.”
- <sup>29</sup> “Semi-Annual Report on the Work of the Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) 1 July to 31 December 2008,” [copy on file with authors], para. 41.
- <sup>30</sup> UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch, “Note of Accomplishments: Technical Assistance Provided to African Countries for Strengthening the Legal Regime against Terrorism,” 31 December 2008, [copy on file with authors].
- <sup>31</sup> Note on Programme Implementation: Delivering Technical Assistance for Strengthening the Legal Regime against Terrorism, January 2003 – December 2008, UN Office of Drugs and Crime, Terrorism Prevention Branch, Vienna, December 8, 2008 [copy on file with authors].
- <sup>32</sup> Countries represented at the meeting (predominantly Ministers of Justice and Security) included Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. UNODC recently provided the ECOWAS Commission with the necessary technical and financial support that led to the adoption of the ECOWAS Action Plan on Drug Trafficking and Related Crimes and the ECOWAS Implementation Plan and Monitoring Mechanism UNODC by Heads of State in December 2008 and June 2009 respectively.
- <sup>33</sup> UN Press Release, “UN Launches Initiative to Rid West Africa of Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking,” 8 July 2009, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31413&Cr=west+africa&Cr1>.
- <sup>34</sup> United Nations Security Council, Presidential Statement, S/PRST/2009/20, 10 July 2009.
- <sup>35</sup> “United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Activities of the United Nations System in Implementing the Strategy, Report of the Secretary-General,” A/62/898, 7 July 2008, p. 3.
- <sup>36</sup> United Nations Development Programme, “UNDP Promotes Small Arms Control in Ghana,” 25 November 2008, <http://www.undp-gha.org/news&event.php?id=91>.
- <sup>37</sup> Julian Brett and Finn Skadkaer Pedersen, “Study to Identify Good Practices of Development Assistance in Support of Counter-Terrorism Capacity Building in Developing Countries,” Commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, July 2008, p. 2 [copy on file with authors].
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> According to UNDP, a “multi-donor trust fund is a funding instrument through which donors pool resources to support national priorities and facilitate UN agencies to work and deliver in close coordination and collaboration.”

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United Nations Development Programme, “UNDP’s Role in the Development System”, 2008, [http://www.undp.org/publications/annualreport2008/undps\\_role\\_un.shtml](http://www.undp.org/publications/annualreport2008/undps_role_un.shtml).

<sup>40</sup> “EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy – Discussion Paper,” from EU CTC to Council/European Council, 14 May 2009 <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st09/st09717.en09.pdf>, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> “EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy – Discussion Paper,” from EU CTC to Council/European Council, 14 May 2009 <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st09/st09717.en09.pdf>, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Finale Communiqué, 15th ECOWAS-EU Ministerial Troika Meeting, Luxembourg, 16 June 2009, paragraph 15.

<sup>43</sup> Finale Communiqué, 15th ECOWAS-EU Ministerial Troika Meeting, Luxembourg, 16 June 2009. See also: Papier d’options: Proposition conjointe Commission-Conseil pour une approche de l’Union Européenne sur la ‘Sécurité et développement’ dans la region Saharo sahélienne, 11 February 2009 [copy on file with authors]. This conference has been postponed due to political reasons.

<sup>44</sup> “EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy – Discussion Paper,” from EU CTC to Council/European Council, 14 May 2009 <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/09/st09/st09717.en09.pdf>, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Commission of the European Communities, The Instrument for Stability – Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2009-2011, 8 April 2009, [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/ifs/docs/mip\\_2009\\_2011\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/ifs/docs/mip_2009_2011_en.pdf), p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> These include the U.S. State Department’s Anti-Terrorism Assistance, Terrorism Interdiction, and related programs. See the U.S. Department of State’s 2010 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/123415.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> The TSCTP includes the Pan-Sahel countries of Mauritania, Mali, Chad, and Niger, as well as Nigeria, Senegal, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

<sup>48</sup> “The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership - Program Overview,” United States Africa Command Website: <http://www.africom.mil/tsctp.asp>.

<sup>49</sup> Lianne Kennedy Boudali, *The North Africa Project: The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership*, Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, West Point, April 2007, p. 3, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA466542&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> *Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership*, United States Government Accountability Office, Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, July 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Yahia Zoubir, “American Policy in the Maghreb: The Conquest of a New Region?” Working Paper 13/2006, 24 July 2006, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/250.asp>.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Toby Arcer and Tihomir Popovic, *The Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative: The US War on Terrorism in North Africa*, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2007 and Clement Henry, “Reverberations of the ‘Global War on Terror,’” in Yahia Zoubir and Haizam Amirah-Fernández (eds), *North Africa: Politics, Region and, the Limits of Transformation*, (Routledge; 2008).