



**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 HOTEL
ABUJA, NIGERIA**

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On 16 and 17 February 2010, the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission co-hosted a workshop with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The two-day meeting on “Building Capacity in the Area of Counterterrorism in West Africa in the Framework of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy” included representatives from the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, the African Union Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT), and counterterrorism focal points from ECOWAS member states, as well as representatives from external partner governments, nongovernment experts, and other representatives from civil society in the subregion.

The 16-17 February meeting in Abuja was part of a larger project focused on improving counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building in West Africa and the broader subregion, which also included a preparatory meeting in Brussels in September 2009 as well as a briefing for UN member states held in New York in October 2009.

The discussions at the workshop in Abuja focused on counterterrorism and related capacity-building efforts in a subregional context. Participants considered the potential opportunities the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy offers for, among other things: improving the assessments of capacity gaps and 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 counterterrorism and related issues.

Discussion focused in particular on the threats to states and vulnerabilities to terrorism in West Africa; gaps in the capacity of West African states to respond to the threat and implement the UN Strategy; ways in which bilateral and multilateral partners can help to build that capacity; the need to improve counterterrorism cooperation and related capacity building in West Africa; and the potentially significant role that ECOWAS can play in that regard.

The meeting opened with a brief overview of the security challenges facing the subregion. It was noted that the threat of terrorism has become increasingly acute for the countries of West Africa as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has extended its reach southward. At the same time, there is increasing awareness of an apparent convergence of terrorism and other transnational criminal activity in the region. Participants noted that states in the subregion and their external partners have become increasingly engaged on the issue of terrorism and that ECOWAS has adopted a series of measures to address these threats, but participants argued that more capacity and focus is needed to effectively meet those challenges. Presaging themes that were addressed throughout the remainder of the workshop, it was suggested that states in the subregion, with

support from partners such as the African Union and ECOWAS as well as external partners including the United Nations, European Union, and various bilateral donors, need to build institutional capacity; better exchange information and intelligence relating to the threat; and deepen cooperation against terrorism. It was noted that in order to maximize the benefit of capacity building assistance, more input is needed from countries in the subregion to clarify their priorities. This workshop, it was suggested, would be a small step forward in identifying key counterterrorism-related priorities of ECOWAS member states and in laying the groundwork for improved counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building.

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 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 – The UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy

This session provided an introduction to and overview of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its significance for the United Nations and the subregion. It also explored the extent to which stakeholders in the subregion are aware of the Strategy and the UN's Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) and what additional steps should be taken by the United Nations, its CTITF, and others to raise this awareness.

The UN Strategy, it was noted, was adopted in September 2006 by every UN member state, including all ECOWAS member states, and elaborates a broad range of counterterrorism measures across four pillars: 1) measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; 2) measures to prevent and combat terrorism; 3) measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and 4) measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

It was noted that the UN's contributions to counterterrorism, however, did not begin in 2006 with the adoption of the Strategy, but also includes a series of 16 counterterrorism conventions dating back to the 1960s; a series of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions condemning terrorism; targeted counterterrorism-related sanctions; as well as a series of UN Security Council resolutions adopted in the aftermath of 9/11, which imposed a range of counterterrorism obligations on all member states. The Strategy, it was pointed out, does not impose new obligations. Rather it bundles these preexisting UN commitments into a single, more comprehensive framework endorsed unanimously by all member states.

What is new about the Strategy, it was pointed out, is that it encompasses a broader understanding of the scope and substance of what constitutes counterterrorism based on its four pillars; in particular by including measures to address underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and measures to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for counterterrorism efforts. Terrorism itself may not be a top priority for some countries in the subregion, but it was noted that the UN Strategy emphasizes the linkages between terrorism and other transnational threats – which are priority concerns for states in the subregion – and situates terrorism within a broader comprehensive peace and security framework.

It was noted that the Strategy therefore offers the subregion a broad-based, long-term framework useful not only in thwarting and responding to terrorist attacks, but also to meeting priority needs and to preventing local populations from turning to terrorist violence in the future. While

acknowledging that more needs to be done to boost ECOWAS member states' "harder" security capacities – related, for example, to intelligence and law enforcement – participants also stressed that more attention should be paid to pillars one and four of the Strategy. This would involve efforts to address problems of social and political marginalization and other conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, which many participants argued are more relevant to the priorities of states in the subregion.

While participants agreed that implementation of the Strategy in West Africa is crucial, they also stressed that West African states have limited capacity to carry forward many of the commitments in that document. West Africa, it was argued, needs strong subregional mechanisms that can help facilitate subregional cooperation and capacity-building activities.

While acknowledging that implementation of the Strategy is first and foremost the responsibility of member states, participants also considered the relevance of the United Nations' efforts to advance the Strategy through the CTITF, its various working groups, and their efforts to catalyze cooperation among different UN actors and nascent outreach to civil society. It was explained that the CTITF is working to catalyze system-wide support across 25 United Nations entities and Interpol, to support member states' implementation of the Strategy. It was noted that the CTITF has established a working group on "Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism" that is tasked with providing a one-stop-shop for assistance to member states who request it. The Strategy and the CTITF, it was noted, have helped to make the UN's different agencies working on issues relevant to counterterrorism more responsive to the broader capacity needs of member states and to bring these different relevant mandates together.

The role of civil society in advancing implementation of the Strategy was also discussed. It was noted that civil society has a vital role to play in the subregion's implementation of the Strategy, by among other things helping to enhance civic engagement, alleviate social and political marginalization, and address grievances that otherwise could lead to violence. It was therefore stressed that with support from the United Nations, states should: a) be more cognizant of the role that civil society can play in this regard without necessarily attaching a "counterterrorism" label to what they are doing; and b) provide civil society the political space they need to operate as independent, but responsible, actors. The UN Strategy, it was suggested, provides a useful framework for states and civil society to engage on the issue; an important tool for civil society to remind states of their obligations; and a useful benchmark against which to measure the actions of the states.

With regard to pillar one, it was noted that while no direct causal link between so-call "root causes" and terrorism has been empirically established, such conditions – including poverty and unresolved conflicts – do create conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, a nuanced but not insignificant distinction made in the UN Strategy. Others, however, argued that the motives behind extremist violence are more rooted in the psychology of individuals. Either way, participants agreed on the need to address the issues highlighted in pillar one of the Strategy as part of a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism, including the importance of improving access to education in the subregion and promoting religious tolerance. In that regard, participants highlighted Morocco's efforts to formally train religious leaders, including women, as a novel approach that might usefully be emulated.

The importance of improving intelligence sharing was also stressed. Participants noted that ECOWAS member states have developed productive bilateral intelligence sharing relationships with a number of external partner countries, even as intelligence sharing arrangements among and between West African countries themselves are deficient. Although participants agreed on the

importance of improving intelligence sharing within the subregion, lack of capacity and trust between national intelligence professionals were cited as key challenges. It was noted that even in the most highly integrated regions, such as Europe, national intelligence agencies are reluctant to share intelligence under the auspices of multilateral organizations. It was recommended that efforts to build such cooperation should proceed incrementally.

It was suggested that the sharing of unclassified, open source, information, something much less controversial and more easily accomplished, can be potentially very useful. Others stressed the importance of broadening the notion of intelligence/security information gathering to include more human security issues. In that regard, several participants highlighted the importance of ECOWAS' Early Warning and Response Mechanism (ECOWARN) as a region-wide observation and monitoring tool for conflict prevention and decision-making. ECOWARN includes two points of contact in each member state designated to ECOWAS (one from government and one from civil society), who submit reports on dozens of security indicators to ECOWAS' headquarters. It was suggested that perhaps counterterrorism-related issues could be incorporated into that arrangement, or that ECOWARN could serve as a model for sharing counterterrorism-related information among ECOWAS member states.

Session II – Regional and subregional counterterrorism framework

This session examined the regional and subregional counterterrorism and related frameworks adopted by ECOWAS and the African Union and their relation to the international framework.

Participants began by pointing out that that terrorism is not a new threat for many countries in West Africa, but is of increasing concern because of AQIM's spread southward in the Sahel/Sahara belt and the confluence of terrorism, kidnapping/hostage-taking, drug smuggling, and other transnational criminal activities in the subregion.

It was noted that African states have acknowledged the seriousness of the threat posed by terrorism. Working through the African Union and its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), African states had begun developing legal instruments and other mechanisms for addressing terrorism well before the 2001 attacks in the United States. In response to escalating terrorist violence in Algeria, East Africa, and elsewhere across the continent during the 1990s, the OAU, it was noted, adopted its Convention to Combat and Prevent Terrorism in 1999. In 2001, African leaders gave new impetus to implementation of that convention with the adoption of the Dakar Declaration against Terrorism which paved the way for the development in 2002 of an AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa. The Plan of Action gave concrete expression to the obligations laid out in the OAU convention and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373. Two years later an AU Protocol to the OAU Convention was also adopted in an effort to update the 1999 convention and address the lack of implementation of both the convention and plan of action.

The African Union and the regional counterterrorism framework, it was noted, play an important role as a link between the international, subregional, and national levels. Participants stressed that the AU regional counterterrorism instruments are complementary to the international/UN counterterrorism framework discussed during the first session. They include many of the same preventive measures and acknowledge many of the same conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and human rights concerns identified in the UN Strategy and relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

It was stressed that terrorism is a multidimensional threat that all organs of the African Union are expected to help address. The African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), including ECOWAS, have distinct yet complementary roles to play in implementing those frameworks. The AU Plan of Action, it was noted, established CAERT to help facilitate implementation of the AU framework among its members. CAERT, it was explained, functions as the AU's technical arm and center of excellence on counterterrorism. It was designed to improve information sharing and cooperation, raise awareness of terrorist threats across Africa, and help build state capacity.

At the core of CAERT's work, it was noted, has been the establishment of a network of national and Regional Economic Community focal points coordinated centrally through Algiers. Forty-four of 53 AU member states have appointed CAERT focal points. Seven of eight regional focal points have been appointed. Those focal points communicate through a secure information system with Algiers on the state of the threat, national responses, and capacity needs. That information is processed and sent to the AU Commission in the form of recommendations and/or referred to the focal points. CAERT also performs an important analytical and support function, conducting regional and subregional threat assessments and organizing thematically focused meetings on issues such as radicalization and terrorist financing. Among the key challenges identified by CAERT in West Africa are lack of harmonization between the counterterrorism measures of individual states and the low operational capacity of many states in the subregion to prevent and suppress terrorist acts.

At the subregional level, it was noted that ECOWAS can play a potentially significant role in helping states in West Africa to implement the regional and international frameworks but that its contribution thus far has been fairly limited. It was noted that although ECOWAS was originally established for the purpose of promoting economic cooperation, integration, and development among its member states, its focus has expanded to include the promotion of subregional peace and security. It has also adopted a series of instruments aimed at addressing counterterrorism-related challenges confronting the subregion. 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 which includes mention of "international terrorism." Subsequent related instruments, such as Conflict Prevention Framework (2008) and the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime (2009) were also cited.

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 on this issue. It was noted that ECOWAS has the draft text of a subregional plan of action on terrorism, but it was not clear what would come of that draft text. ECOWAS, it was noted, has also participated in various meetings organized by CAERT as well as workshops and site visits organized by UN bodies, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC's) Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB), and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), in and to the subregion. Finally, it was noted that the ECOWAS Commission has designated a counterterrorism focal point officer to follow up on, assess, and coordinate the organizations' counterterrorism activities, but that financial and political support within the ECOWAS Commission for those activities remains limited. 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 as it already does in other security-related areas. Participants suggested that ECOWAS is conscious that it needs to devote more attention to these

matters in light of the growing threat to the subregion and is eager for guidance on how to move forward to develop a more robust counterterrorism program.

It was suggested 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. 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.

Among the initial ECOWAS priorities identified by the participants were: a) to bolster the resources dedicated to the issue within the ECOWAS Commission; b) the establishment of an operational network among the counterterrorism focal points of ECOWAS member states; c) the creation of a subregional counterterrorism database that facilitates the sharing of terrorism-related names and other information among ECOWAS member states; and d) facilitating the exchange of intelligence among ECOWAS member states.

To improve on its modest efforts in the area of countering terrorism to date, it was suggested that ECOWAS member states should consider creating a more robust counterterrorism program perhaps along the lines of the IGAD's Capacity Building Programme Against Terrorism (ICPAT), which works with member states, external partners, and a nongovernment think tank (the Institute for Security Studies) in an innovative partnership to help improve counterterrorism capacity building and cooperation in East Africa. It was suggested that ECOWAS could draw from the ICPAT's example, adding that ICPAT has enjoyed notable success in building a subregional community of security personnel and in improving counterterrorism capacity and cooperation in a difficult region.

Participants praised the integrated framework on drugs and crime developed by ECOWAS in consultation with its partners, in particular the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, but some questioned why terrorism had not been included in that framework given its obvious relevance to those issues. Other participants were critical for what they perceived to be a lack of cooperation between different relevant bodies within ECOWAS responsible for issues related to terrorism, e.g., small arms, drugs, and money laundering.

In considering what a possible ECOWAS framework and/or mechanism on counterterrorism might look like, it was observed that the threat in the region is not confined to ECOWAS member states but includes a number of countries in the Sahel that are not members of ECOWAS. Therefore, participants suggested that it might be necessary to find some accommodation that would permit the inclusion of non-ECOWAS states, such as Mauritania, in any eventual subregional framework and/or mechanism on terrorism. On this point it was also suggested that cooperation with the Community of Sahel-Saharan States on these issues should be given more serious consideration, as it would allow for the participation of nearly thirty countries from North, East, West and Central Africa, including the Sahel region.

Participants also highlighted the important role that civil society can and should play at the subregional level in helping to build capacity and advance implementation of the regional and international counterterrorism frameworks. The UN Strategy, it was observed, provides a role for civil society, as does the ECOWAS conflict prevention framework. A number of relevant civil

society networks were cited, including the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), as good models of the positive role that civil society can play in prompting government action on critical peace and security issues and holding them to account for their international commitments. It was suggested that Strategy implementation and counterterrorism related issues more broadly should be integrated into those existing networks.

Session 3 – Terrorism and related security challenges in West Africa: Threats, vulnerabilities, and capacity gaps

In this session the panelists and other participants 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. It was observed that West Africa faces a daunting array of vulnerabilities and capacity gaps when it comes to addressing the threat of terrorism.

AQIM was identified as the main terrorist threat, but participants also cited local groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) as persistent security threats to the subregion. Participants were, however, careful to distinguish between groups such as MEND with more limited local aims and groups such as AQIM and the corresponding strategies required to deal with each.

With regard to AQIM, it was emphasized that the group now poses a threat to all of the countries of the Sahel and the broader subregion and as such requires a *subregional* response. Participants cautioned that uncoordinated national responses risked simply pushing the problem from one country to another and therefore urged ECOWAS, in collaboration with other concerned states, such as Mauritania, to play a bigger role in coordinating a more effective subregional response.

The lack of a subregional counterterrorism framework was itself cited as a major vulnerability for the ECOWAS region, and participants urged the adoption of a comprehensive subregional counterterrorism framework and mechanism to improve counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building.

Other related vulnerabilities in the region that were highlighted include the fragility of states, the spread of extremist ideologies, ethnic and religious violence, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, widespread poverty, and social, political, and economic marginalization. It was noted that these and other issues confronting the subregion make it more vulnerable to terrorism, complicate its response, and in some cases contribute directly and indirectly to threat. For example kidnapping/hostage-taking, it was noted, is widespread from the Niger Delta to Mali and Mauritania and while it is often financially rather than politically motivated, it can help to fund terrorist groups, including AQIM. West Africa's geographic position, it was noted, also makes it a favored transit point for drugs on their way to Europe from Latin America and participants noted with alarm an apparent increase in cooperation between drug traffickers and members of AQIM in the Sahel. Participants also noted other challenges, including illegal migration, piracy, human trafficking, and other transnational crimes.

There was general acknowledgement that the threat of terrorism is a real concern and that states in the subregion are becoming increasingly engaged on the issue. Participants, however, highlighted a number of shortcomings in the capacity of states to respond, including ignorance of the threat among populations and the corresponding difficulty in securing popular support for devoting limited resources to counterterrorism; weak institutions; corrupt and/or ineffective law

enforcement; inadequate security infrastructure; and in some cases civil conflict. The issue of growing radicalization – particularly among vulnerable youth populations – was also raised as a matter requiring greater attention. Lack of information sharing within and between security agencies at the country level and between different countries in the subregion was also cited as a major impediment to effective national law enforcement efforts.

In terms of bolstering counterterrorism legislation at the national level, it was noted that at least four ECOWAS member states have adopted counterterrorism-specific legislation, but that some countries in the subregion face problems in adopting such measures, as a result of legitimate concerns relating to freedom of expression. Participants stressed the importance of having complementary counterterrorism legislation in place across the subregion and indicated that UNODC/TPB and other assistance providers have provided and stand ready to provide additional assistance to states in West Africa to help them adopt and implement the various international counterterrorism conventions.

Participants noted that some of the most significant challenges to effective counterterrorism stem from deficiencies in law enforcement. It was noted that law enforcement agencies in West Africa suffer from lack of capacity, both in terms of adequate training and equipment and as a result of low wages and corruption. Several participants noted that organizations such as Interpol have provided tools, such as communications equipment, computerized databases and document readers, along with training, but because of the aforementioned shortcomings and capacity gaps, there is a profound inability to make effective use of those tools. For example it was noted that in West Africa arrest warrants are largely handled through slow and cumbersome diplomatic channels rather than through Interpol's I-24/7 system which allows countries to share arrest warrants and other important data almost instantly. It was observed that many states in West Africa lack the basic resources to extend access to those tools beyond their National Criminal Bureaus. Some participants questioned whether – given that states in the region do not use existing Interpol mechanisms for sharing information – it is realistic to suggest that countries will be more willing or able to contribute information to and make use of a subregional counterterrorism database or mechanism for sharing intelligence.

On the issue of border control, some suggested that undemarcated borders and a lack of capacity to patrol large stretches of terrestrial and maritime borders means that any national effort to gain comprehensive control is almost futile. Problems securing borders in the subregion, it was suggested, are further compounded by the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, which can hinder the ability of border control officials to track cross border movement. Others proposed alternative models for enhancing border security, or more accurately “border management,” which depend on enlisting local communities along the borders to report suspicious movements. The “cross-border area” concept, which has been established with initiatives in Mali with the support of the Sahel and West Africa Club of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, was cited as one example where a network of community radio stations on both sides of the border has been set up and played a role in tackling smuggling and banditry. The UN Institute for Disarmament Research and its efforts to improve community policing efforts at borders where small arms proliferation is a concern was also mentioned as a possible model to consider.

Participants also highlighted the need for civil society to play more of a role in identifying and addressing vulnerabilities and gaps that impede implementation of the UN Strategy in West Africa. It was noted that academic and think tank researchers from the region should play a more prominent role in conducting locally-generated needs assessments that take region-specific needs and contextual issues into account.

Session IV – National responses, capacity needs, and priorities

This session allowed the CAERT focal points and other ECOWAS member states representatives an opportunity to highlight their priorities in dealing with the security threats that they face and their capacity constraints in this regard.

Focal points from ECOWAS member states expressed their concerns about the threat from terrorism and other forms of transnational criminal activity affecting West African peace and security. Concerns about the activities of AQIM in the north and its spread southward were highlighted. The vulnerabilities identified in the previous session were widely shared and reiterated by the country representatives, with particular attention to how those issues were impacting national responses to terrorism

Many of the priority needs and capacity gaps cited by the ECOWAS member state representatives related to the challenges identified in the previous session, including the challenges of patrolling long, porous borders; lack of inter-departmental cooperation; and insufficient sharing of information between states in the region. A number of focal points stressed the importance of bolstering maritime security, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, where it was noted a number of countries have relatively unpatrolled and sparsely populated coastlines and coastal islands that are easily exploited by drug traffickers and other criminals. Similarly, participants also cited the need for assistance in helping many Sahelian states to exert better control over their territories and borders.

Participants noted that implementation of the international and regional counterterrorism frameworks discussed earlier requires resources that many countries in the region simply do not have – or which must be diverted from dealing with other pressing priorities. There was a general call from the participants for the international community to do more to provide training, funding, and logistical support to bolster the capacity of governments in the subregion to deal with the threat of terrorism. Building counterterrorism capacity in the subregion, it was noted, helps improve the capacity of those states to address many of their other priorities as well as other priorities of donors such as illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

A number of countries discussed their efforts to join and implement the universal counterterrorism instruments. Some noted that they still lack implementing legislation or specific counterterrorism legislation. A couple of the member state representatives specifically requested assistance in developing counterterrorism and counter terrorist financing legislation and information on where such assistance requests should be directed. It was noted that the UN's CTED and UNODC/TPB provide such assistance, as do regional and subregional organizations such as CAERT and the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money Laundering (GIABA). Other countries argued that while they do not have specific counterterrorism legislation, their existing criminal law provisions are adequate for dealing with the threat.

A number of focal points described assistance efforts with partner countries which are working to help develop operational capacity; provide training and equipment to security services; establish counterterrorism units; improve networking between agencies; track illicit financial flows; establish financial intelligence units; and freeze assets.

While acknowledging the importance of building such counterterrorism specific capacities, many of the ECOWAS member state representatives stressed that this should not come at the expense of ongoing development efforts in the subregion. Those representatives stressed that countering

terrorism requires both counterterrorism-specific assistance but also assistance to build the capacity of governments in the subregion to address underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. They emphasized that terrorism breeds in poverty and suggested that partner countries should do more to target and realize development projects that build the institutional capacities of governments in the subregion to meet the basic needs of their people in areas such as education, health care, and employment. ECOWAS member state representatives also called on UNESCO, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and other nontraditional counterterrorism actors to become more engaged in helping to address these conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

Representatives from countries in the subregion less directly affected by terrorism also stressed the importance of not being complacent. Even countries which have been deemed low-risk countries for terrorism, it was argued, need to remain vigilant. It was noted that increased capacity in one country, for example, to combat drug smuggling or terrorist financing can, and has, led to those problems jumping the border to previously unaffected jurisdictions. Therefore participants called on donors to avoid a situation where a handful of countries receive the lion's share of donor attention. Unfortunately, it was observed that in countries where the threat is less apparent, governments face a significant challenge in building the necessary political will to take preventive action. In such countries the challenge, it was argued, may not only be lack of resources but also be lack of political will.

The point was made by ECOWAS member state representatives that in some cases, the security services are themselves a source of instability and that in some countries counterterrorism specific capacity building is of limited utility, and perhaps even counterproductive, without fundamental reform of the security sector. Participants suggested that counterterrorism capacity building efforts need to reinforce ongoing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and Security Sector Reform efforts in the subregion. They called on donors to support and continue to support the reform of the security sectors of states in the subregion. In that regard, the UN Strategy's emphasis on human security was a welcome recalibration of what some perceived as a over emphasis on building the military capacities of states to deal with terrorism.

It was observed that many of the vulnerabilities discussed are common to less developed countries the world over – yet most are not affected by terrorism. The argument therefore was made that the common denominator is the pernicious ideology of violent extremism and that more should be done to counter the spread of violent radical ideologies in the region.

It was noted that the President of Mali has called for a strategic meeting between countries in the region on counterterrorism. ECOWAS member states and bilateral and multilateral partners were urged to support that initiative which could provide a useful opportunity to advance the discussion about how to improve counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building in the subregion.

Session V – Enhancing the UN's efforts to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism

This session looked at activities in West Africa that have been undertaken or are planned by UN bodies and agencies to strengthen the subregion's counterterrorism capacity and assess their impact. It also included a discussion of the areas where more work needs to be carried out and the role the UN can play in helping to coordinate their support. Participants discussed in particular the ongoing work of CTED and UNODC/TPB as well as that of GIABA, although it is not a UN body.

It was noted that UNODC/TPB's work focuses on promoting a rule of law based criminal justice response to terrorism, especially through training, which it was noted has benefited all the countries in West Africa. TPB assists UN member states in their efforts to ratify the universal legal instruments against terrorism, implement and improve arrangements for mutual legal assistance and extradition, and strengthen the capacity of national criminal justice systems to prevent and counter terrorism.

It was noted that 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 combating terrorism in West Africa. TPB has organized workshops aimed at strengthening international cooperation in criminal matters relating to terrorism among states in West Africa, including a June 2009 workshop convened in Las Palmas that focused on strengthening international cooperation and legal instruments on extradition and mutual assistance. TPB is now compiling a compendium of bilateral, regional and international instruments on mutual legal assistance as a follow up to that meeting, as a tool for further facilitating cooperation among ECOWAS member states.

It was also noted that a meeting convened in Vienna, by various UN member states and in close cooperation with CTED, UNODC, and with input and support from the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation provided a venue for national counterterrorism focal points to exchange good practices and share other valuable information on national efforts and activities. TPB indicated that it stands ready to support West African efforts to explore ways of elaborating a region-wide network of focal points.

It was noted that UNODC recognizes the need for a more integrated approach to its capacity building assistance that pulls together a range of UNODC programs on related issues such as corruption, transnational crime, and drugs. Participants considered the West African Coast Initiative (WACI), in which UNODC has joined forces with the the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the UN Office on West Africa (UNOWA), and Interpol to support efforts to combat drug trafficking and transnational crime. Although they welcomed the initiative as an integrated effort to strengthen the national capacities of some of the subregion's most fragile states, the participants questioned why the main counterterrorism actors in the UN system, TPB and CTED, seemed not to be part of that effort. Participants also welcomed efforts by UNODC and the broader UN system to improve the coherence of their counterterrorism-related capacity building efforts through the CTITF and its "Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism."

Participants also considered CTED's various efforts to engage ECOWAS member states on counterterrorism issues, to monitor national efforts to implement Security Council Resolutions 1373 and 1624, identify capacity needs, and facilitate the delivery of technical assistance to address these needs. It was noted that CTED has conducted a number of site visits to ECOWAS member states in collaboration with representatives from other relevant organizations, e.g., ECOWA and GIABA, and has completed Preliminary Implementation Assessments of all ECOWAS member states which are the primary basis for its dialogue with states. Participants also heard about a number of resources CTED has made available, including its Global Survey on Implementation of Resolution 1373 (2009) and its Directory of International Best Practices, Codes and Standards.

Based on the publicly available Global Survey, it was noted that the priority gaps identified by CTED in West Africa are adoption of national legal frameworks against terrorism; improving their internal coordination at the policy and operational levels; and encouraging states to improve security at entry points of land and sea borders, including expanding access to Interpol resources.

It was noted that CTED has recently made an effort to take a subregional approach in West Africa. Participants welcomed that shift and the close cooperation that CTED has developed with a number of regional organizations working in West Africa, including CAERT and ECOWAS. Participants also welcomed CTED's efforts to better coordinate its technical assistance facilitation through the CTITF and its various working groups, in particular on integrated assistance.

In addition to adopting more of a subregional rather than country-by-country approach to West Africa, it was also noted that 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. CTED, it was noted, has also emphasized improving the security of travel documents issued by countries in the subregion. 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 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 in implementing the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF's) global standards.

In particular, participants considered GIABA's model legislation on counter terrorist financing which it has made available to ECOWAS member states. It was noted that to this date, eight ECOWAS member states, largely inspired by the GIABA, have enacted CTF legislation.

In discussing the United Nations' contributions to building state capacity to prevent terrorism a number of participants also highlighted the importance of the UN's nontraditional counterterrorism actors such as UNESCO, the UNDP, and the Alliance of Civilizations and their role in helping countries to address underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

Session VI - Enhancing bilateral and regional and subregional capacity-building efforts in West Africa

This session considered what concrete steps should be taken to enhance cooperation and capacity-building efforts in West Africa, with a view to increasing local ownership over them. In particular, the session looked at the role for ECOWAS, the African Union, and other regional/subregional and bilateral actors. It also considered to what extent efforts to build counterterrorism and related capacities should be integrated into existing subregional mechanisms or, alternatively, whether a dedicated subregional framework and/or mechanism, perhaps under the auspices of ECOWAS, might be necessary to improve subregional cooperation and capacity building on counterterrorism.

Participants highlighted the linkages between security and development and the need to pursue both mutually reinforcing goals simultaneously when providing assistance. Awareness of these linkages, it was noted, increasingly guides the development policy of many donors. Participants

argued that counterterrorism should not be seen as separate from development or good governance, and cited various efforts by donor countries to integrate counterterrorism concerns into their development and capacity building efforts in the subregion. Operationalizing this link between development and security, it was recommended, necessitates the integration of counterterrorism considerations into national development strategies.

It was suggested that donors, multilateral partners, and states in the region need a framework and/or mechanism at the subregional level under the auspices of ECOWAS to better coordinate counterterrorism related capacity building in West Africa. Such a mechanism, it was suggested, could help to monitor and promote implementation of international, regional, and eventual subregional frameworks on counterterrorism; help to evaluate the needs of ECOWAS member states; convey that information to relevant bilateral donors and multilateral assistance providers; and help to pool resources and avoid duplication of efforts. It was suggested that any eventual subregional mechanism could go further and become itself a provider of capacity building assistance for West African states, much like the ICPAT is for East African states.

While it was again acknowledged that ECOWAS contributions on counterterrorism specifically have been somewhat limited to date, it was stressed that ECOWAS member states are increasingly engaged on the issue and that there is growing political will among ECOWAS member states for the Commission to develop a more robust role in this area.

Donors and multilateral assistance providers, it was argued, have a strong partner in ECOWAS and are eager to see the body take a political decision to engage more on counterterrorism and play a large role in improving counterterrorism cooperation and capacity building in the subregion.

There was broad support among the participants for the development of a multidimensional counterterrorism unit in West Africa. In considering how such a subregional framework and/or mechanism might be established participants suggested that any such mechanism should be built on existing structures; that ECOWAS should be the basis for that; and that any operational network of focal points should build on the existing CAERT focal point network.

It was suggested that a subregional network of counterterrorism focal points might usefully be expanded beyond just CAERT focal points, which it was noted are frequently representatives from the military, to also include representatives from security services, law enforcement, the judiciary, and prosecutors. In addition to a multidimensional counterterrorism unit and network of focal points at the subregional level, it was suggested that individual countries in West Africa should also establish interagency counterterrorism units within their own governments to improve interdepartmental cooperation.

It was also pointed out that Interpol might provide a useful basis on which to build subregional counterterrorism cooperation among law enforcement officials. It was noted that ECOWAS recently created a Committee of Police Chiefs and Security Chiefs to complement the work of the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO) which only includes police chiefs, not representatives from other relevant security agencies. It was also noted that a core activity of the West African Coastal Initiative (WACI) is the establishment of Transnational Crime Units (TCUs) in each of the target countries which are intended to serve as elite interagency units responsible for investigation of high level transnational organized crime.

It was observed that the ECOWAS Commission does have a platform on which to build a more robust counterterrorism mechanism. It has established a counterterrorism focal point officer and

the makings of a subregional focal point network in the existing CAERT focal points. The next step, it was argued, is for the ECOWAS Commission to provide the necessary staff, resources, and political support for the creation of a full fledged unit or office dedicated to the issue just as there are for other issues such as small arms and light weapons. Participants also suggested ECOWAS should do more to clarify the modalities of cooperation between the different bodies within ECOWAS working on counterterrorism and other related issues.

It was recommended that a first step towards establishing a counterterrorism framework and multidimensional counterterrorism unit could be for ECOWAS to undertake an assessment of the threat and vulnerabilities in West Africa in cooperation with a West African think tank that highlights 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. With a sophisticated assessment in hand, it was suggested, support could be built 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.

Hope was expressed that the results of this meeting would send a clear message to the ECOWAS Commission, ECOWAS member states, and other relevant stakeholders of the utility of such a subregional counterterrorism mechanism and framework and provide them with a clearer idea of the way forward. As an intermediate step, participants suggested that existing ECOWAS and UN programs on drugs and organized crime might be enriched to include elements on counterterrorism.

It was suggested that G8 countries and other partners stand ready to provide support to states in the region in their efforts to improve subregional counterterrorism cooperation and capacity. It was noted that a good deal of counterterrorism capacity building assistance is available, for example, through the U.S. Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and its Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, as well as the assistance programs of other G8 and non-G8 partner countries. ECOWAS focal points were encouraged to present assistance requests to local embassies for consideration.

Finally, participants again highlighted the important role that civil society can play in promoting subregional counterterrorism cooperation and urged that counterterrorism concerns be integrated into established civil society networks in the region. In addition to the role ascribed to civil society in the UN Strategy, 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 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. It was suggested that civil society can play an instrumental role in raising awareness of the threat, including by providing local assessments, and the importance of developing a subregional response.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

General

- Counterterrorism capacity-building activities in West Africa should be carried out in the context of the broader and more politically acceptable framework outlined in the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. 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. Specifically, counterterrorism considerations should be integrated into national development strategies.
- The UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation 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) consider expanding that network to also include relevant representatives from security services, law enforcement, the judiciary, and prosecutors; e) create a subregional counterterrorism database that facilitates the sharing of terrorism-related names and other information among ECOWAS member states; and f) 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.
- ECOWAS should work to improve and clarify the modalities of cooperation between the different bodies within the Commission dealing with issues related to counterterrorism, including any eventual counterterrorism mechanism within the Commission.
- 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.

- Efforts should be made to include Mauritania in activities undertaken by and with ECOWAS to develop Western African capacity to combat and prevent terrorism

ECOWAS member states and external partners

- ECOWAS member states should establish multidimensional counterterrorism units within their own governments to improve interdepartmental cooperation and liaise with international, regional, and subregional focal points.
- 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 implementation of 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; and c) where the UN Strategy intersects with other existing strategies in the subregion, *e.g.*, any adopted by ECOWAS or the African Union, to address different security-related challenges.
- 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).

- Nontraditional counterterrorism actors within the UN system, UNDP and UNESCO in particular, should increase their engagement on Strategy implementation and engage proactively in the work of the CTITF and its working groups.
- Counterterrorism issues and actors should be integrated into relevant ongoing UN and ECOWAS programs in the subregion on drug trafficking and transnational crime, in particular efforts to support implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking and organized crime

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.
- Where appropriate, Strategy and counterterrorism related issues more broadly should be integrated into existing civil society networks in the region.
- Civil society organizations and networks in the region should work to promote awareness of the threat of terrorism and the UN Strategy and the importance of developing a subregional response.