

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY IN AFRICA: OPPORTUNITIES
AND CHALLENGES**

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Introduction

Adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly on 8 September 2006, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy marked the first time that all UN member states agreed on a common framework for addressing the terrorist threat. Its four-pillar plan of action, which includes measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, measures to prevent and combat terrorism, capacity-building, and ensuring a human rights and rule of law-based approach to countering the threat, sets forth a holistic way forward that reinforces what many terrorism experts have long believed, namely that to be effective a counterterrorism strategy must combine preventative measures with efforts to address both real and perceived grievances and underlying social, economic, and political conditions.

Part of the Strategy's significance lies in the fact that it is an "instrument of consensus" on an issue where consensus has been difficult to achieve on a global level. Although it adds little to the pre-existing UN counterterrorism resolutions, norms, and measures, simply pulling them together into a single, coherent, and universally adopted framework is important.

Part of the Strategy's significance also lies in the fact that it represents a shift away from the Security Council-led approach, which has defined the United Nations' post-11 September 2001 response. The central role the council has played in imposing and monitoring global counterterrorism obligations, in particular via Resolution 1373, has created a perceived lack of legitimacy due to the council's limited membership. In addition to being excluded from the council's policy-making discussions and frustrated by the lack of transparency exhibited by both the council and its different counterterrorism-related bodies, many states also resent the council's narrow, New York-based, paper driven approach, which fails to take into account the underlying socio-economic conditions that may give rise to terrorism. All of this has had a negative impact on the willingness of some states to cooperate fully with the council effort. With

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the inclusion of the council mandates in the context of the broader Strategy framework adopted by the General Assembly, a truly global counterterrorism framework in which all states voluntarily committed to implementing those obligations has been established for the first time. As such, it might help narrow divide between the council and the General Assembly and more fundamentally help reconcile the security agenda of the global north with the development priorities of the south.

By representing a conceptual shift away from a primarily law enforcement and military approach to a “softer” one, which might be characterized as a “human security” approach to counterterrorism and by reflecting the views of all UN member states, the Strategy has helped move the counterterrorism discourse at the United Nations more in line with the perspective of many Africa governments. Further, given the often unproductive emphasis that has been placed on “hard” security approaches to combating terrorism in parts of Africa to date, the Strategy offers an opportunity to develop a holistic, more balanced and hopefully more effective approach to addressing the complex and multifaceted threat.

A challenge confronting the Strategy, and broad UN framework documents generally, however, is that its breadth and ambiguity make it potentially “everything and nothing” at the same time. This makes the always difficult process of transforming paper commitments made by diplomats in New York into action on the ground even more so. Yet, for the Strategy to have a sustained impact on global counterterrorism efforts, UN member states must “utilize this [historic] tool and translate it into action.”¹ Because the nature and perception of the threat varies in the different parts of Africa, a one-size-fits all approach to implementation is unlikely to be effective or appropriate. Not only do different regions and subregions need to determine how best to implement the Strategy’s generally broad provisions to maximize its impact on the ground, but African stakeholders need to ensure that implementation is not a top-down exercise initiated from and dictated by New York, but rather proceeds from the bottom-up and thus reflects the needs, priorities, and concerns of the continent and its diverse regions.

Sustained implementation of the Strategy will require contributions from a wide range of stakeholders, starting first and foremost with member states, but also including the UN system, the African Union, and relevant regional bodies, and civil society. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the General Assembly during its first formal review of the Strategy in early September 2008, “multilateral counterterrorism efforts must be done in partnership with regional and subregional organizations and with civil society.”² While contributions from each of these stakeholders are essential, the Strategy can also serve as a basis for improving the overall coordination and cooperation within and among them on the continent.

Nearly every country in Africa has taken important steps to implement the Strategy within its borders, a number of which were recounted during the recent General

¹ Jean-Paul Laborde, Statement, “Informal meeting of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” New York, 4 December 2007.

² Remarks to the General Assembly by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, 4 September 2008, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/ga10735.doc.htm>.

Assembly review of the Strategy. Some collective efforts are also being undertaken to an extent at the AU and at the subregional level, but they remain uneven. This paper highlights some of the challenges to realizing more sustained implementation of the Strategy over the long-term and suggests some ways in which they might be overcome.

Lack of Awareness

Perhaps the most fundamental challenge to effective implementation on the continent is the general lack of awareness among many stakeholders in Africa of the Strategy itself and its potential practical significance. Those government officials in nontraditional counterterrorism fields and civil society organizations and even most national counterterrorism practitioners have had limited exposure to , and in many cases are unaware of, the Strategy.

Efforts to spread the word should come from many directions: the United Nations, member states, the AU, and relevant subregional bodies across the continent. More outreach is needed to counterterrorism practitioners, such as prosecutors, judges, and other law enforcement officials, as well as nontraditional counterterrorism actors, both within governments and intergovernmental bodies, and civil society. At the level of the United Nations, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (Task Force) and its now 24 constituent entities³ need to be more proactive and work together to raise awareness of the Strategy across the continent and elsewhere outside of New York and Vienna. This should include more Strategy outreach initiatives in the field that include regional and subregional bodies and civil society rather than continuing with narrower initiatives that focus on the work of individual Task Force members. With the General Assembly having provided the Task Force with few of its own human and other resources, however, the Task Force has yet to undertake any such activities. In addition, the lack of a full-time, senior-level Task Force coordinator has impeded outreach efforts as well. For their part, following the example that will be set by South Africa in late November 2008 when it brings together more than two dozen national departments and agencies to discuss Strategy implementation at the national level, member states should seek to ensure that all relevant agencies and departments are informed of the Strategy and develop a national implementation plan.

³ The 24 different entities represented on the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force are the Counter-Terrorism Committee's Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate; the Department for Disarmament Affairs; the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; the Department of Political Affairs; the Department of Public Information; the Department for Safety and Security; the Expert Staff of the 1540 Committee; the International Atomic Energy Agency; the International Civil Aviation Organization; the International Maritime Organization; the International Monetary Fund; the International Criminal Police Organization; the Monitoring Team of the 1267 Committee; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Office of Legal Affairs; the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute; the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; the World Customs Organization; the World Bank; and the World Health Organization.

Addressing Capacity Gaps

A second challenge to Strategy implementation in Africa is the need to address the significant counterterrorism-related capacity shortfalls on a continent where the threat of terrorism is often seen as less salient than other criminal activity, poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDs, and other pressing issues. The public demands placed on often weak institutions, as well as the demands posed by corruption and efforts to promote democratic reforms, frequently overshadow any calls for enhanced domestic efforts to respond to terrorist threats and vulnerabilities.

Despite the different threat perceptions and experiences with terrorism and counterterrorism across Africa, many parts of the continent share similar vulnerabilities and thus capacity needs, a number of which will need to be addressed in order to see significant progress on Strategy implementation. These include equipment; training for police, judges and prosecutors; improving border control and monitoring unpatrolled coastlines; strengthening interdepartmental cooperation; upgrading communications equipment and facilities; combating terrorist financing; detecting document forgery; and combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Some countries continue to lack counterterrorism legislation and 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.

With the significant capacity gaps and vulnerabilities in many African countries, nearly every part of the UN system represented on the UN Task Force has an important role to play in supporting Strategy implementation on the continent. These different parts include both the traditional counterterrorism bodies such as the various council ones, in particular the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and its Executive Directorate (CTED) and the UN Office of Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Terrorism Prevention Branch, as well as entities not traditionally associated with counterterrorism such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the UN Education, Science, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Coordinated, strategic, and sustained engagement by different parts of the UN system will be needed to help countries on the continent to implement the Strategy in an integrated manner.

The creation of the UN Task Force working group on "Facilitating Integrated Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy," which includes representatives from the main UN counterterrorism actors involved in technical assistance, is a step toward improving coordination and cooperation across the broader UN system on Strategy-related capacity building. It remains unclear, however, whether the working group can stimulate the necessary cooperation from states and information sharing and coordination among UN assistance providers. Presently, the working group, and Task Force as a whole, suffers from a number of fundamental weaknesses, including the purely voluntary nature of participation by their members, lack of adequate resources and mandate, the limited engagement by and with member states, regional and subregional bodies and civil society groups, many of which are involved in capacity-building activities, and the difficulties engaging in the field outside of UN headquarters.

Realizing Coordinated, Strategic, and Sustained UN Engagement in Africa

Thus, despite the Task Force's efforts, a third challenge to seeing more progress on the implementation of the Strategy in Africa is achieving the necessary coordinated, strategic, and sustained engagement by the UN, something that have so far proven elusive.

Despite the existence of the Task Force, nearly all of its emphasis has been on internal coordination among UN headquarters in Geneva, New York, and Vienna. Limited attention has been paid as to how to strengthen on-the-ground cooperation among UN Strategy-related actors in the field in Africa and elsewhere. The traditional UN counterterrorism actors are based in New York and Vienna, making short, infrequent visits to continent that often do not include the sustained follow-up needed to ensure concrete results. UN counterterrorism actors and activities have generally not been integrated into the UN country teams or wider programs and the vast majority of UN resident coordinators have shied away from involvement with what had been viewed in many quarters as a Security Council-imposed, and thus unpopular, agenda. A more integrated UN approach to its Strategy-related work at the country and subregional levels in Africa, which includes regular interactions with counterterrorism practitioners, is needed. The UN also needs to ensure that local perspectives on Africa's Strategy-related vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities are reflected in its assessments.

Although the Task Force includes representatives from those parts of the system focused on "softer" counterterrorism issues, these nontraditional counterterrorism actors have been reluctant to participate actively in its work. This has left the perception in many circles that the council continues to be the main counterterrorism actor within UN system and that Strategy implementation efforts are therefore primarily focused on its law enforcement and other security-related aspects.

Ensuring a Whole-of-Government Response

This lacuna in the UN effort heightens a fourth challenge: ensuring a whole-of-government response to implementation at the national level. One of the virtues of the Strategy is that it offers the opportunity to stimulate a more comprehensive national response to countering terrorism and to deepen interagency cooperation and coordination. This should not be limited to traditional counterterrorism actors, but include human rights, development, health, and social services ones as well. So long as the development and education actors in the UN are reluctant to engage with the Task Force or through the lens of the Strategy and so long as the Task Force's working groups continue to pay limited attention to those issues related to addressing conditions conducive to terrorism, which are paramount for most African countries, the more difficult it will be for the UN to impress upon and work with countries to promote a whole-of-government Strategy implementation plan.

UN counterterrorism efforts continue to emphasize short and medium-term measures aimed at catching and bringing terrorists to justice and strengthening national counterterrorism infrastructures. Much of the UN's focus and assistance has been on

training criminal justice and border security officials and pushing for more robust counterterrorism legislation; generally encouraging African countries to enhance their operational capacities. Yet, as Peter Gastrow and Annette Hübschle from the Institute for Security Studies have written, the call for tough action “where democracy is fragile and governance is weak”⁴ may in the end be counter-productive as it can escalate rather than diminish the threat. For example, “anti-terrorism legislation forced down the throats of countries with weak or non-functioning criminal justice systems is little more than symbolic value while economic failure continues to erode legitimacy and foster an ideological vacuum and disaffection at every level amongst an increasingly youthful population.”⁵ In some instances, strengthening law enforcement and other counterterrorism authorities has led to increased violations of human rights and the repression of civil society, with counterterrorism legislation being misused by some governments to crack down on certain groups.⁶

Overcoming the Political Sensitivity to “Counterterrorism”

A fifth challenge to effective Strategy implementation on the continent relates to the political sensitivity surrounding the issue of counterterrorism and difficulties in gathering support from different parts of Africa for initiatives labeled as such. The international counterterrorism rhetoric may be too muscular and unnecessarily polarizing for a continent where some view it as an external or specifically Western agenda. Framing Strategy implementation efforts in the context of more palatable notions such as promoting good governance, strengthening national institutions, reducing poverty, and combating transnational crime, may resonate better with states and other stakeholders on the continent. The ability of the UN to do this, however, is undermined by both the lack of active participation from UNDP (and UNESCO) in the Task Force and its general reluctance to associate itself with the Strategy in the field.

This, despite the important contribution that UNDP, including through its democratic governance, poverty reduction, and crisis prevention and recovery program, and its field presence in all African countries, can make to the implementation of the Strategy. So long as UNDP’s overabundance of caution remains, it will be difficult for the Task Force to leverage any UNDP expertise, resources, or build on the partnerships it has with local actors across the continent. Perhaps more importantly, this will also make it difficult to link the UN’s work on helping countries realize the Millennium Development Goals with the UN Strategy, despite the explicit inclusion of the former in the latter.

Finding ways to get UNDP to be less reflexively “anti-counterterrorism” is crucial to encouraging the United Nations to become more active at the country level, where UNDP is the most prevalent actor. In addition, if UNDP were to become more engaged with the Task Force and in promoting the Strategy—and if there were more

⁴ Peter Gastrow and Annette Hübschle, “African Perspectives on the International Terrorism Discourse,” *African Security Review*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1 October 2006, p. 70.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ George Kegoro, “The Effects of Counter-Terrorism on Human Rights: The Experiences of East African Countries,” *Understanding Terrorism in Africa: In Search for an African Voice*, Institute for Security Studies, Seminar Report, 6 and 7 November 2006, p. 53.

collaboration and coordination between UN's rule of law machinery and the Task Force—there would likely be increased opportunities to use the often more politically palatable rule of law framework through which to pursue cooperation on many Strategy-related issues. Such an approach may prove more fruitful in some African countries than one dominated by the CTC and CTED.

Dispelling the Notion that Engaging with the Task Force and on the UN Strategy Will Compromise UNDP's Ongoing Work

Thus, a sixth challenge to Strategy implementation on the continent is to dispel the notion that engaging fully with the UN Task Force and on the Strategy will interfere with the work UNDP is doing within its core mandates. One exception to UNDP's general reluctance to engage has been UNDP Kenya's counterterrorism program funded by Denmark, which has involved close cooperation not only between UNDP and the traditional UN counterterrorism actors such as CTED and UNODC's TPB, but also with government actors, civil society, and faith-based groups. Although this may be the exception that proves the rule, it demonstrates both the logical synergies possible on the ground and that UNDP's slow-moving efforts to devise a policy on counterterrorism and the Strategy in New York need not preclude cooperation in the field. In addition it provides model of cooperation among a wide array of stakeholders on the ground with expertise in various Strategy-related issues cutting across all four pillars that could be reproduced elsewhere with regard to Strategy implementation.

Deepening the Involvement of the AU and Subregional Bodies

In the end, as the former UN Under Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, said, only a strategy that focuses on much-needed institutional capacity building and includes elements aimed at “reduc[ing] the hospitable environment for terrorists to recruit and thrive and ... deal[ing] with the prevalence of poverty, economic duress, interlocking conflicts, poor governance, and criminal networks, which are often exploited by terrorists,”⁷ and one in which African states have a sense of ownership, will be effective. The UN Strategy, which has a holistic framework endorsed by all African states and places great emphasis on the promotion of sustainable development, outlines this type of approach. To ensure that implementation of the Strategy reflects an “African voice,” African organizations will need to embrace it and work with their members to implement it.

Thus, the seventh and perhaps most significant challenge that will need to be overcome in order to realize sustained implementation of the UN Strategy in Africa is finding ways to get the AU and subregional bodies on the continent more involved in this effort. Both the Strategy and the resolution adopted by the General Assembly in September 2008 following its first formal review recognize the important role these bodies can play and call for enhancing their contributions, although provide no details on how this might be achieved.

⁷ Statement by Ibrahim Gambari, under secretary-general for Political Affairs, UN, New York, *Africa's Response to Terrorism*, 17 February 2006, para. 9, <http://www.aionline.org/files/FullReportTerrorismSymposium2006.pdf>.

The comparative advantages of these bodies in this field are many. As practical realities vary from region to region, regional and subregional bodies are potentially better suited to develop approaches that can take into account cultural and other contextual issues and undertake specific, geographically-focused initiatives or other actions that complement and build upon Strategy objectives. They can also play an important role in transporting and explaining the global framework to national and regional actors, increasing a sense of local ownership of the UN Strategy and fostering and maintaining momentum on the ground that is fundamental to ensuring its sustained implementation. In addition, they can lend political support for Strategy implementation efforts, including by adding calls in regional or subregional ministerial statements for states to implement the Strategy. Such a high-level approach at the AU or regional level, for example, could resonate more among Africans than at the level of the United Nations. They could also facilitate the exchange of expertise and information among governmental and non-governmental experts, as well as the sharing of good national practices and lessons learned from national implementation among the countries of the region or subregion. They can also develop frameworks of regional or subregional cooperation among relevant experts and institutions dealing with different aspects of the UN Strategy. Finally, some African bodies have been involved in work that is related to Strategy implementation—in areas such as capacity building and adopting their own counterterrorism conventions and action plans—since well before the adoption of the Strategy. As a result, some have beneficial expertise and experiences to share with the UN Task Force and its working groups. Operationalizing these contributions so that they enhance and sustain implementation of the Strategy, however, requires a certain level of resources and political commitment, which is lagging in many organizations on the continent, as well as more focused engagement between these bodies and the UN system, in particular the UN Task Force, which has also lagged considerably.

Mirroring the debates that have taken place within individual African states, each intergovernmental body engaged in counterterrorism in Africa in some form or another “has had to confront, at the practical level, the debate which emerged after 9/11 as to whether terrorism in its current state and manifestations, constitutes a serious threat to the continent on the same scale as poverty, the health crisis and internal conflicts.”⁸ This debate, as well as the need, particularly in the context of the U.S.-led “Global War on Terrorism,” to protect and maintain Africa’s focus on development, has complicated the efforts of some multilateral bodies in Africa to contribute to implementing the global counterterrorism framework.⁹

At the continental level, the AU has adopted a broad-based normative framework to combat terrorism via its 1999 counterterrorism convention, 2002 protocol, and 2004 counterterrorism plan of action. Unfortunately that framework has yet to be

⁸ Martin Ewi and Kwesi Aning, “Assessing the Role of the African Union in Preventing and Combating Terrorism in Africa,” *African Security Review*, vol. 15 no 3, 1 October 2006, p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

implemented by many of its 53 member states.¹⁰ The divergence in threat perceptions among its members has contributed to lagging implementation, but competing priorities within the AU Peace and Security Commission and differing perceptions of the threat, as well as a lack of resources, have also limited the AU's contributions in this area.

Although the AU has yet to formally endorse or otherwise adopt a position on the UN Strategy, the Peace and Security Commission is in the process of developing an AU position, with a view to convening a meeting of the Peace and Security Council in the second half of 2008 to adopt an AU communiqué on AU efforts and their relation to the UN Strategy. The intent was to have the communiqué endorsed by AU ministers in New York during the 2008 General Assembly debate, although this does not appear to have occurred. Such a high-level political endorsement of the UN Strategy from African officials would help stimulate UN Strategy implementation action at the continental, subregional, and national level in Africa.

In addition to this political support, through its Algiers Center for the Study and Research of Terrorism

(ACSRT) established in 2004, the AU can make a practical contribution to promote implementation of both its continental counterterrorism framework and the UN Strategy. This move is a logical step, given that the two are mutually reinforcing. The ACSRT is charged with enhancing counterterrorism capacities and cooperation among its members. It envisions a highly integrated network of state and Regional Economic Communities' (RECs) focal points coordinated centrally through Algiers. As of April 2008, it had convened two meetings of all national and REC focal points and four subregional meetings. In addition, it has organized a few training seminars at its well-equipped facility in Algiers. Although many of these seminars addressed counterterrorism issues relevant to the UN Strategy, each was geared to promoting the implementation of other UN and AU instruments, with a narrower focus, rather than trying to place those instruments in the context of the broader Strategy

In general, much like the AU Commission, a lack of both human and financial resources has limited the ability of the ACSRT to make practical contributions to fulfilling its wide-ranging mandate. Given its limited capacity, broad mandate, and the difficulties the center has in working with individual AU members and REC focal points in a sustained manner, it may make more sense for the ACSRT to develop a mechanism for dealing with the RECs more effectively and prioritize its development ahead of engagement with individual AU states.

The 2004 protocol to the OAU counterterrorism convention explicitly endorses the complementary role that African subregional bodies, including those officially recognized by the AU as RECs, can play in furthering implementation of the AU framework. Given the institutional limitations of the AU, the key political difficulties

¹⁰ For example, only 37 AU member states have ratified the 1999 Organization of African Unity counterterrorism convention and the 2004 AU protocol to the convention is not yet in force, due to a lack of ratifications.

among its members, and the vast size of the continent, more meaningful contributions to UN Strategy implementation in Africa might also be found at the subregional level. So far, a number of African subregional bodies have developed frameworks and/or programs for

addressing the terrorist threat and other cross-border crime and security issues. Some suffer from similar resource and political constraints. However, others have units within their secretariat focused on developing and implementing subregional programs and liaising with the various parts of the UN system and bilateral donors. This is particularly true for bodies such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) Capacity Building Program Against Terrorism (ICPAT), the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs' Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO),¹¹ the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs' Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO),¹² and the Eastern and Southern African Anti-Money Laundering Organization (ESAAMLG),¹³ each of which has benefited from the support from and cooperation with partner countries and organizations outside of the continent, and somewhat less so for the Southern African Development Community (SADC)¹⁴ and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).¹⁵

¹¹ The EAPCCO secretariat is housed in the Interpol subregional bureau in Nairobi and works with ICPAT and UNODC to strengthen counterterrorism measures in East Africa and encourage the sharing of information among its member states on terrorism activities. Its affiliation with Interpol gives it direct access to that organization's resources and expertise.

¹² SAARPCO's secretariat is housed in Interpol's subregional bureau in Harare, Zimbabwe, so it is essentially part of that organization, giving it direct access to Interpol's resources and expertise. SAARPCO has been able to develop and implement a series of practical programs, a number of which reinforce elements of the UN Strategy. These include the creation of a counterterrorism desk to assess relevant legislation in member countries, determine gaps and strengths, and make recommendations to the SARPCCO Legal Sub-Committee.

¹³ ESAAMLG, a Financial Action Task Force-regional style body, has a critical role to play in implementing the anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing provisions of the UN Strategy, which give priority attention to the implementation of the 40 recommendations on money laundering and the nine special recommendations on terrorist financing of the Financial Action Task Force. The ESAAMLG secretariat, which is funded by ESAAMLG member states as well as outside donors, currently comprised of two professional staff with plans to expand to five, organizes legislative drafting capacity building programs, with training focused on the specific FATF recommendations.

¹⁴ Although SADC has yet to devise a subregional response or mechanism to address terrorism, its secretariat is working with both UNODC and CTED to enhance collaboration on counterterrorism in the SADC region. Several joint UNODC-SADC activities have been initiated, including a subregional workshop for senior criminal justice officials focusing on the legal aspects of counterterrorism and related international cooperation in criminal matters, a ministerial conference on the ratification and implementation of the universal legal instruments against terrorism, and a series of bilateral technical assistance and training activities involving individual SADC members. Finally, SADC member defense and security experts met for the first time in December 2006 under the auspices of UNODC, marking the first time SADC member state officials met specifically discuss how the subregion could improve its response to terrorism.

¹⁵ The counterterrorism portfolio within the thinly staffed ECOWAS Commission (or secretariat) is assigned to the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security. The most recent counterterrorism initiative undertaken by ECOWAS was to invite all member states' counterterrorism focal point officers to inform the commission about their counterterrorism activities, difficulties, and gaps. Armed with this information, the commission is hoping to plan

The work of ICPAT, which focuses on capacity and confidence-building measures in the IGAD subregion, working closely with partners at the continental and global levels, deserves particular mention here as a model for an innovative approach to developing an effective subregional counterterrorism program.¹⁶ It is funded by European and other partners, administered by an African nongovernmental organization with research and networking experience in the security area (the Institute for Security Studies), and overseen by a steering committee made up of the member states of IGAD and including nonvoting representatives from the countries that provide direct support to ICPAT. This partnership approach has allowed it to overcome the human and financial resource limitations that other parts of IGAD as well as many other African multilateral bodies suffer from. If there is the necessary partner support, it could be replicated in other subregions.

Although ICAPT's program was launched in 2006, a number of other African bodies began working on issues related to counterterrorism since well before the adoption of the Strategy and even before the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. Many of the programs were in fact part of the continent's reaction to the al-Qaida attacks on Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Going forward, the challenge for those interested in promoting the implementation of the UN Strategy will be to reinforce these existing efforts and stimulate new counterterrorism initiatives that reflect local conditions, are seen as home grown, and avoid the perception of being imposed by the United Nations or other external actors.

To this end, there are a number of concrete steps that African countries may wish to encourage the relevant subregional bodies to take to deepen their involvement with UN Strategy issues. These include: 1) endorsing the Strategy; 2) devising action plans for Strategy implementation and committing to reviewing implementation efforts on a regular basis; 3) establishing counterterrorism units or focal points within their secretariats for Strategy/counterterrorism-related issues; and 4) providing these units/focal points with the mandate and resources to engage with their member states and the United Nations on Strategy issues. If resources are an issue, the necessary funding and expertise could be sought from partner countries or NGOs.

A first step to building support for the Strategy within these bodies and in the subregions themselves, however, is finding additional ways for the Task Force and its constituent entities to engage more regularly and effectively with them. Its broad membership and network of member state and REC focal points would seem to provide the AU with a comparative advantage for serving as the entry point for such engagement with interested multilateral bodies on the continent. However, due to the organizational and other limitations noted above, it may be more appropriate in the short- and medium-

meetings for the establishment of an ECOWAS coordination network for the harmonization of all coordination activities in the subregion. In addition, ECOWAS has continued to work with different partners, including both UNODC and CTED, to further legal cooperation on terrorism matters in the subregion.

¹⁶ Its focus is on enhancing judicial measures, interdepartmental cooperation, border controls, information sharing, training, best practices, and strategic cooperation among its six member states (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda).

term for this engagement to begin at the subregional level. To this end, the relevant RECs, including SADC, IGAD, and ECOWAS could appoint focal points within their respective secretariats with which the Task Force could begin to engage more regularly, not just with the relevant organization, but with its member states as well.

These focal points could also take the lead in establishing informal subregional task forces on Strategy implementation, which could form a critical component of the bottom-up approach to Strategy implementation that will be essential to its sustainability on the continent. Rather than waiting for the UN Task Force or the different parts of the UN to engage with them, the continent should approach the Task Force in New York to articulate the continent's vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities. This should start at the subregional level, with each subregion developing and presenting to the UN Task Force a threat assessment and Strategy implementation plan, and a list of needs and priorities in the context of the Strategy.

Conclusion

The adoption of the UN Strategy, with the holistic approach to counterterrorism it espouses, provides the African continent with a unique opportunity to reframe the counterterrorism debate that has been dominated by the "global war on terrorism" since September 2001. However, there are a number of challenges, some of which have been identified in this paper, which will need to be addressed in order to operationalize the document on the continent. First and foremost, this will require the necessary political commitment from the member states themselves at the national level and in the AU, subregional bodies, and at the UN. In addition, the UN system and the wider UN membership will need to rethink how the global body can best support Strategy implementation efforts in Africa. In doing so close attention should be paid to ensuring that the perspective of African countries, which has been captured in the Strategy, is reflected in the UN's efforts to further its implementation as well.