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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1170TH MEETING

22 AUGUST 2022
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/BN.1170 (2023)

BRIEFING NOTE

ON THE CONTINENTAL EARLY WARNING AND SECURITY OUTLOOK

CONTINENTAL EARLY WARNING AND SECURITY OUTLOOK

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The continued proliferation of terrorist and violent extremist groups in Africa has made many parts of the Continent epicenters of terrorism and violent extremism within the global context. Although in the past the local terrorist groups have benefitted from their alliances with global terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida and Islamic State, the groups have become more autonomous and capacitated in their planning and execution of attacks.

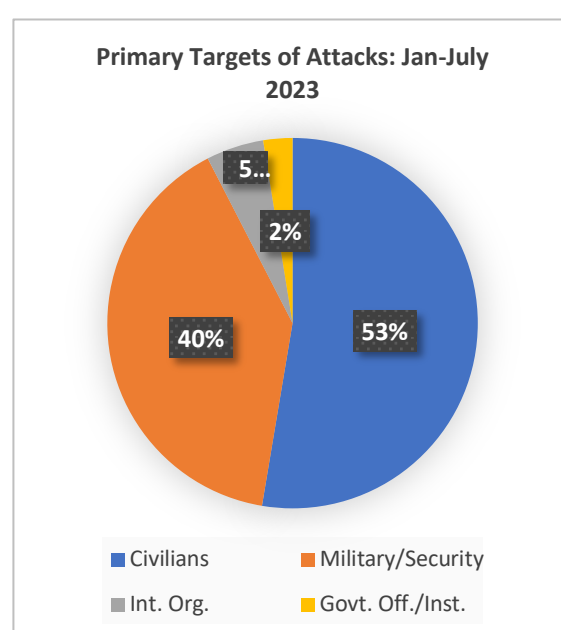
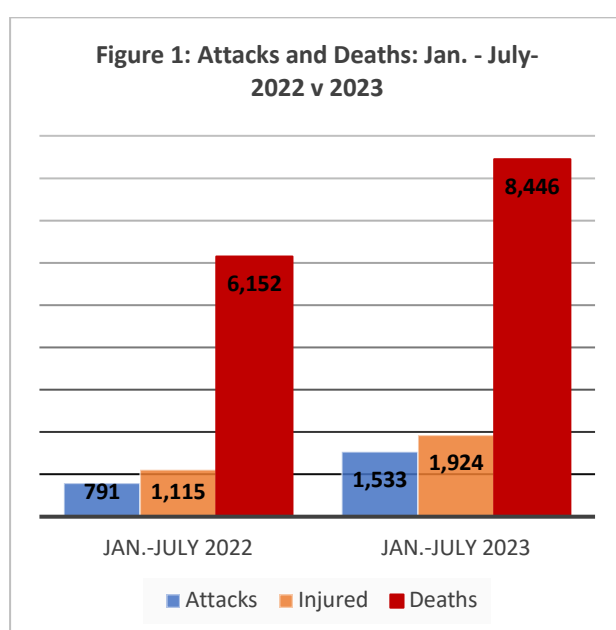
2. During the reporting period, covering January to July 2023, terrorist and violent extremist groups demonstrated great combat experience and expertise in executing complex and sophisticated attacks. They have also exhibited great level of technical know-how in the manufacturing and deployment of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). As a result, the groups have proven more resilient and entrenched, further hampering the ability of security forces to defeat them.

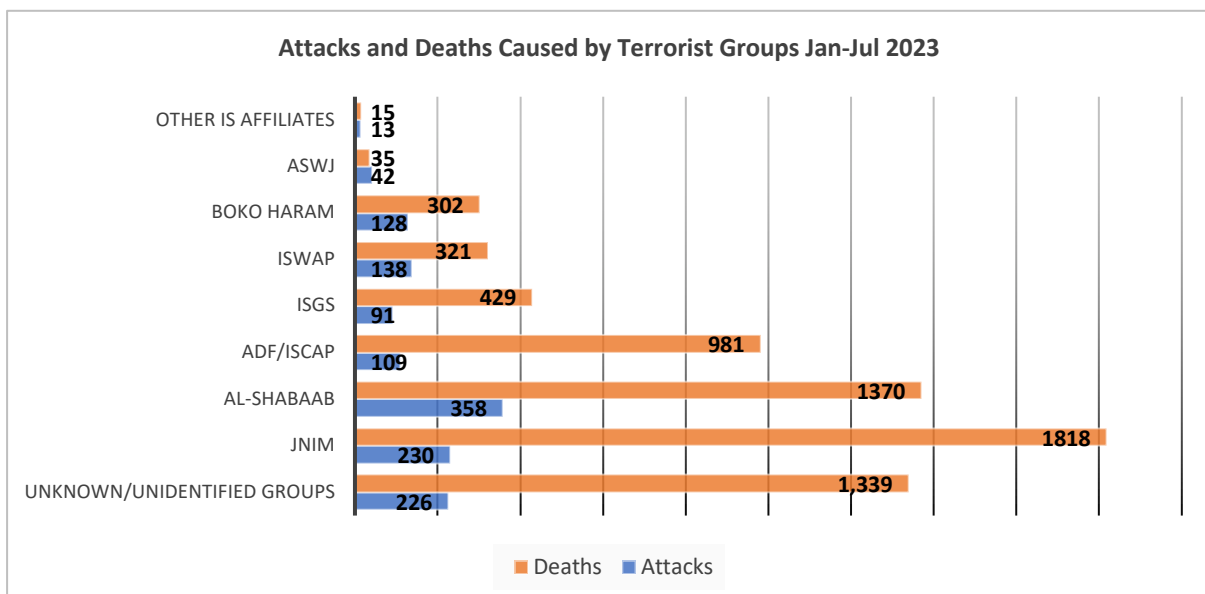
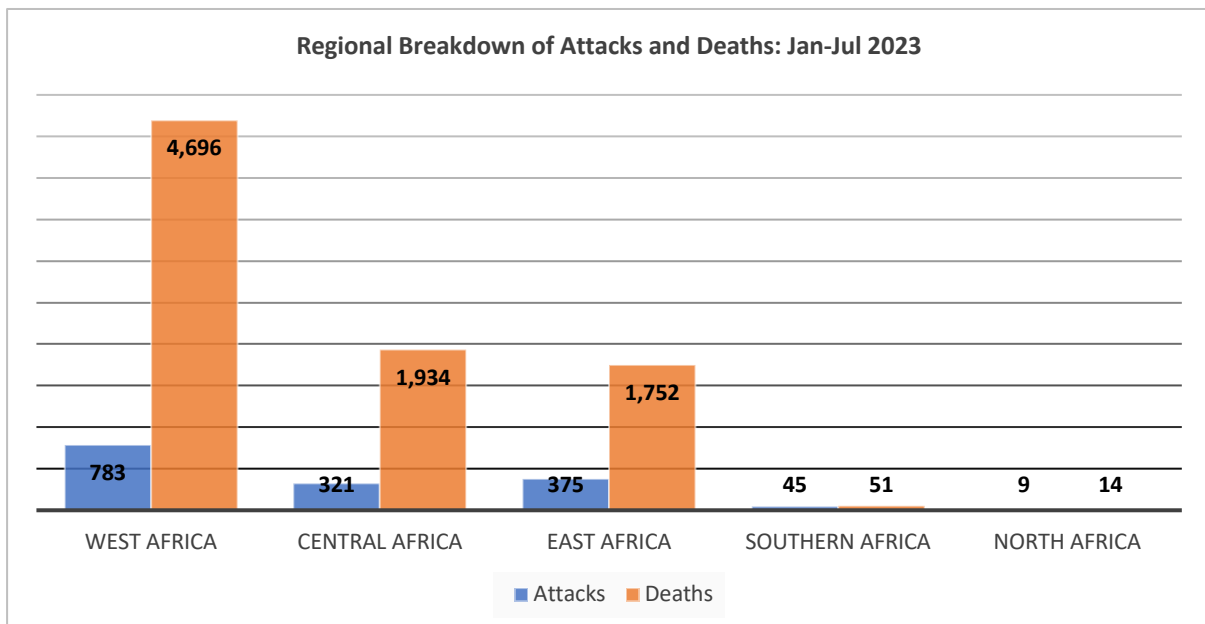
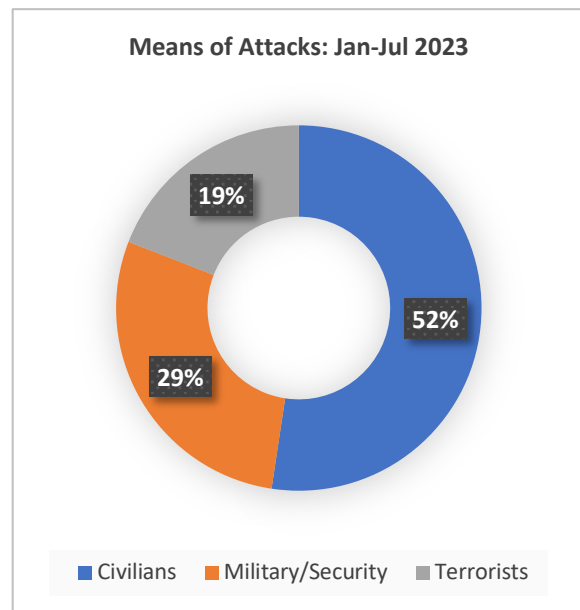
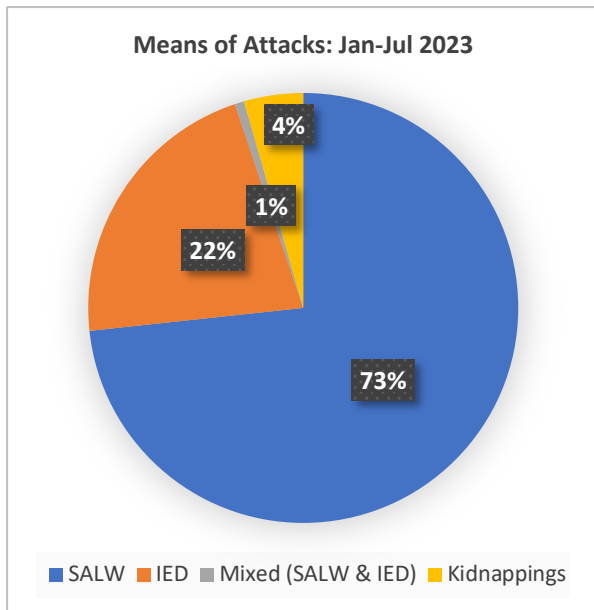
3. Increasing linkages of transnational organized criminal (TNOC) networks with terrorist and violent extremist groups continue to enhance the resurgence and resilience of terrorist groups, including access to sustained financial resources through kidnapping for ransom, drug and human trafficking, illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources and wildlife products.

II. TERRORISM SITUATION IN AFRICA

4. According to the Africa Terrorism Database hosted by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the period from 1 January to 31 July 2023 recorded a total number of 1,533 terrorist attacks resulting in 8,446 deaths across the continent higher than those recorded in the same period in 2022. The 2023 data represents an increase of 94% and 37% in the number of attacks and deaths respectively, when compared to same period in 2022.

5. **The five most affected countries** during the reporting period are: Burkina Faso, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, and Mali, accounted for 75% and 89% of attacks and deaths, respectively.





6. **Sahel Belt of West Africa.** The security situation in the Sahel remains fragile and characterized by incessant terrorist attacks and ethnic tensions. The region recorded 543 attacks and 2,685. The trilateral-border area of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger referred to as the **Liptako-Gourma** remained the heavily affected. JNIM and ISGS were the dominant groups in the Sahel. These groups are jostling for influence in the region and, as such, committing deadlier cycles of violence in the region. These events undoubtedly increased terrorism activities in the region. The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by JNIM is alarmingly increasing around areas of its operation.

7. **Burkina Faso** can be classified as the epicenter of terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region, where terrorist attacks have become more complex and sophisticated. For example, on 17 February 2023, suspected ISGS militants ambushed a military convoy between Deou and Oursi in Oudalan Province, near the border with Mali. The incident led to the death of at least 70 soldiers while security forces in a reprisal attack killed about 60 of the assailants. Similarly, about 86 people comprising soldiers, civilians and terrorists died in Ouahigouya commune, in Yatenga province, in an attack perpetrated by JNIM on 15 April 2023. These attacks have resulted in high fatalities in the country. The situation has forced the Government to deploy community auto defense groups whose activities are sometimes violating the fundamental human rights of local population, making them further vulnerable to recruitment by the terrorist groups.

8. In **Mali**, the security situation also remains volatile. Fighting between ISGS and JNIM resurged, and civilians continue to pay the price as terrorist activities flares up. Despite the extensive counter terrorism operations by the Malian Armed Forces (FaMA), the groups continue to exhibit great momentum to launch devastating attacks. On 10 April 2023, ISGS took over Tidermène town in Ménaka region while on 22 April 2023, JNIM fighters claimed responsibility for an attack on a military base and the airport in the central Malian town of Sévaré, using Suicide Vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIEDs) that killed three soldiers, and 10 civilians. On the other hand, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) suffered heavy attacks from the terrorist groups resulting in the deaths and injuries to peacekeepers. In an interesting turn of events, on 16 June 2023, following the request by Transitional Government of Mali to the UN Security Council (UNSC), for the immediate withdrawal of (MINUSMA) troops, on 30 June 2023 the Security Council, unanimously adopted Resolution 2690, terminating the mandate of MINUSMA by ceasing its operations, transferring its tasks and withdrawing its personnel by 31 December 2023. The departure of MINUSMA troops risks complicating the security environment in Mali as terrorist groups could exploit the vacuum and further entrench their activities in the region. This in effect creates the leeway for the groups to expand their activities beyond the Sahel towards the littoral countries.

9. In **Niger**, ISGS stepped up its attacks in South-West (Tillabery) located within the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area. On 10 February, 17 soldiers were killed by ISGS in Banibangou, Tillaberi close to the Malian Border. Other departments attacked include Tera, Tahoua, and Maradi. For instance, ISGS attacked a refugee's camp at Tillia located in Tahoua close to the border with Mali and Burkina Faso and killed 18 Civilians. On 26 July Presidential Guards, led by **General Abdourahamane Tiani**, overthrown Niger's democratically elected **President Mohamed Bazoum**. The current political instability has the potential to worsen terrorism and violent extremism situation in Niger, the Liptako-Gourma area and the Sahel region as a whole.

10. **Coastal States of West Africa.** The threat of terrorism in coastal West Africa continues to deteriorate. The deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso continue to trigger militant encroachment southwards into coastal States of West Africa, particularly in Benin and Togo. The rapid development now leaves Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana, on high alert against possible attacks. Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo have experienced increased numbers of displaced persons fleeing terrorist attacks

in Burkina Faso. This situation is creating a national security crisis as some of the local populations are reportedly crossing into the neighboring countries with their cattle.

11. In **Benin** Departments such as Atakora and Alibori consistently experienced attacks from JNIM militants. For example, Suspected JNIM militants attacked Kerou community within Atakora department and killed at least 15 civilians and kidnapped 12 others. The incessant terrorist attacks have expanded from targeting defence forces to planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on roads, and assaulting civilians. These attacks have disrupted normal daily activities of the local population.

12. In **Togo**, the situation further deteriorated in the Northern Savane region. Two attacks in the villages of Tolga and Gninga resulted in the deaths of soldiers and civilians. On 10 February 2023, suspected JNIM militants attacked the Tola village, located within the northern Savanes region of Togo, killing at least 31 civilians in what appears to be the deadliest terrorist attack in Togo, to date. The deteriorating security situation compelled the parliament to extend the State of Emergency in the northern region of Savanes for 12 months on 6 April 2023, with the aim to help prevent incursions by terrorist groups operating across the border with Burkina Faso. The initiative was first implemented in June 2022. Prior to the State of Emergency, the country recorded multiple attacks around the Savanes region.

13. **Lake Chad Basin.** The region recorded 291 attacks, leading to 1,409 deaths higher than those recorded in same period in 2022. The Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) continued to operate and control territory in the Northeast **Nigeria** states of Borno, Yobe, Adawama and Taraba and across the Lake Chad Basin, despite suffering major setbacks from the MNJTF counter-terrorism operations. ISWAP has also been active in the Northwest and North Central states, where dozens of bandit groups continued to engage in deadly raids, kidnappings for ransom, and other violent criminal activities. Boko Haram also conducted a significant number of attacks against civilian populations in local communities within the north-eastern states.

14. In **Cameroon**, Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to generate insecurity in the Far North region. The use of IEDs has become rampant, further worsening and threatening the living condition of communities. An IED attack by Boko Haram on 21 March 2023 between the towns of Kolofata and Amchide, southwest of the Cameroon-Nigeria border killed 10 soldiers.

15. In Southeast **Niger**, Diffa, N'Guigmi, and Maine Soroa departments were heavily attacked by ISWAP and Boko Haram militants. On 11 March 2023, in Toumour village within Diffa, suspected ISWAP militants attacked the village, killing at least nine civilians and abducted two others near Bosso department.

16. The Lake Chad Basin, which is a hotbed for Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorism activities, is experiencing illicit proliferation of SALW initially meant for the war in Ukraine, but which have now been diverted to Africa. This was alluded to by the **President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E. Muhammadu Buhari** when he addressed the 16th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission held at the Presidential Villa in Abuja, Nigeria on 29 November 2022. He indicated that ***"The raging war in Ukraine serve as major sources of weapons and fighters that bolster the ranks of the terrorists in the Lake Chad Region. Weapons being used for the war in Ukraine are equally beginning to filter to the region"***. H.E Bola Tinubu in his inauguration address pledged to introduce several policies aimed at addressing the burgeoning insecurity. It is expected that a hard-line approach would be adopted against the terrorist groups to stem the insecurity.

17. **East and the Horn of Africa.** Terrorist attacks in the region increased by over 40%, and fatalities increased by 145%. Al-Shabaab remains the most active terrorist group in the region, concentrating the mass of its attacks in Somalia and to a lesser extent in Kenya. Although other groups elsewhere in Africa have increased their use IEDs, Al-Shabaab remains the most IED-lethal group in the Continent, recording 43% of the total IED attacks across Africa.

18. **Kenya** counties of Lamu, Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir recorded attacks perpetrated by Al-Shabaab militants. Security forces bore the brunt of the majority of the attacks. For instance, on 14 February 2023, four police officers were killed when the vehicle they were travelling in ran over an IED in Garissa. Similarly, three soldiers were killed in Gabi Districts located in Mandera County by Al-Shabaab militants on 22 February 2023. Even though the group carried out sporadic attacks across the various operational corridors, the lethality of attacks in Kenya has decreased. The month of June recorded the highest number of attacks, 14 in total, and Mandera County recorded the highest number of attacks for the period, followed by Lamu and Garissa counties, respectively. Kenya recorded 67% increase in the number of total attacks in the second quarter. The spike of attacks in June could be as result of the announcement made by Kenya and Somalia in May 2023 to re-open their border within 90 days that was closed in 2011 as an effort to contain the growing al-Shabaab violence. Kenya could also be at the receiving end of retaliatory attacks from Al-Shabaab, following its increasing role in the offensive against Al-Shabaab in Somalia in the first quarter of 2023.

19. **Somalia** experienced more than 80% of total attacks and 90% of deaths in the region. The pattern of attacks remained the same in Somalia with Mogadishu recording the highest number of attacks, at 28%. Al-Shabaab also maintained pressure in Hirshabelle by raiding clan militia positions, and by attacking civilians accused of supporting government forces and clan militias. During the period, a relatively stable region of *Sanaag*, situated in northeastern Somaliland, recorded an attack. This suggests that Al-Shabaab could be moving to newer areas of the operation following revised and robust counter-terrorism operations by the new government where it has joined forces with pro-government clan militias since late 2022. However, the recent attack against the Ugandan contingent of ATMIS where Al-Shabaab terrorists stormed the military camp killing more than 50 Ugandan soldiers was one of the complex attacks orchestrated by the group. The attack on the Ugandan Contingent suggests that the group is re-strategizing and recuperating. The drawdown of ATMIS troops, if not well planned and executed could spike terrorist attacks, as the security vacuum created could enable al-Shabaab to launch offensives to undermine Somali security forces in liberated areas.

20. In **Uganda**, the Allied Democratic Force (ADF), also known as the Islamic State in Central Africa Province (ISCAP) launched an attack on Mpondwe Lubiriha Secondary School in Kasese district bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in which 43 people were killed including 38 students. The attack could be a direct retaliation for the joint military operations of Ugandan and Congolese forces in eastern DRC.

21. **Central Africa and the Great Lakes region.** The **Great Lakes** region was the least affected epicenter, registering 181 attacks, the number of resultant deaths was much higher at 2,104. The Central African region continues to register a significant increase in attacks triggered by different violent groups. Armed separatists continued their attacks in South-West and North-West regions of Cameroon, while various rebel groups committed atrocities in many parts of Central African Republic (CAR) against government security forces. At least a total of more than 20 government soldiers were killed in various parts of South-West and Northwest Regions of Cameroon by separatist groups. Similarly, armed rebel groups killed approximately 80 people in various parts of CAR.

22. In the Great Lakes region, **Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** was fraught with increased violent incidents, particularly in Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu provinces, perpetrated by

various armed groups. The groups include the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) formerly known as Madina at Tauheed wau Mujahedeem (MTM), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) among others, as well as local violent extremist group including - Congo Development Cooperative (CODECO), Zaire, Movement of 23 March (M23), range of Mai-Mai and other community-based groups. A developing trend of targets against the Christians community was detected. The ADF splinter group, MTM, consisting of mainly Muslims and operating under ISCAP banner, continue to ignite anti-Christian sentiments. ISCAP increased the use of IEDs in its attacks. The increasing use of IEDs in the region suggests that experienced Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) are in the area, and ISCAP is fast developing the technical competence of manufacturing and deploying these devices, something that could in the near future change the landscape of the terrorism situation in eastern DRC. However, the deployment of Eastern Africa Community Regional Force in the region is expected to improve the security situation in the region.

23. In **Chad**, even though no confirmed terrorist attack occurred in the country for the period under consideration, the increasing attacks against civilian and military targets, by political violent groups and rebel element is a cause for worry. In May, the Chadian army dismantled positions of the Front de la Nation pour la Démocratie et la Justice au Tchad (FNDJT) and the Council of Military Command for the Salvation of the Republic (CCMSR) rebel groups in the Kouri Bougoudi region. Everything indicates that these rebel groups are behind most attacks against civilians. At the end of the sweeping operations 23 rebels were killed and 8 wounded and the army also had casualties. These new attacks, if not dislodged, could over time develop into entrenched insurgencies and could be difficult to control.

24. Meanwhile, in the **Central African Republic (CAR)** several rebel groups, most notably the Coalition of Patriots for Change (PCC) and the 3R group committed atrocities against government security forces and civilians. At least a total of 18 soldiers were killed in various parts by rebel groups.

25. **North Africa and the Maghreb.** North Africa and the Maghreb region remained relatively stable. In comparison to the same period in 2022, there was a significant drop in number of attacks and deaths. The continued improvement in the situation in North Africa and the Maghreb region could be attributed to continuous counter-terrorism operations underpinned by enhanced intelligence gathering capabilities of security forces. In many countries, including Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, cells linked to IS were dismantled while some suspected terrorist individuals were arrested. The improving security situation in North Africa suggests that global terrorist networks, which had active cells across North African countries, have focused their attention on Sub-Saharan Africa where weaker security measures are rampant.

26. In **Algeria**, on 10 May 2023, in Bordj El Emir Abdelkader, Tisselit region, army patrol team clashed with presumed AQIM militants during a clearing operation in Ain Al Ksira near Bordj Emir Abdelkader. One Algerian soldier was killed. The continued counter-terrorism operations in southern Algeria have kept terrorism sustainably at bay. However, the recent upsurge in terrorist activities in the Sahel is a major threat for the country, hence the need to intensify intelligence sharing among neighbouring countries.

27. The security situation has considerably improved and stabilized in the Sinai Peninsula of **Egypt**, with few recorded incidents of low intensity and lethality. An IED planted by suspected Islamic state militants exploded south of Bir Al-Abd, Sinai killing a child and injuring at least two other civilians. At least four security personnel were killed on 30 July 2023 at El Arish in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. A group of detainees seized weapons inside El Arish's Central Security compound and attacked forces stationed there. Six people were also wounded. Sustaining the counter-terrorism momentum in the Sinai

Peninsula will require a whole of society approach including building community resilience to counter extremist narratives.

28. In **Mauritania**, four Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) terrorists who were imprisoned at the Central Prison in Nouakchott escaped after attacking National Guards on duty on 05 March 2023. The attack resulted in an exchange of gun fire between the guards and the terrorists. Two members of the National Guards were killed during the exchange, while two others were slightly injured. However, the Mauritania Elite Unit of the National Gendarmerie, supported by the First Commando Battalion, and the Mauritanian Military Aviation, killed three terrorists who escaped from the Prison on 11 March 2023 at Al-Maddah, Lamasidi area Adrar state.

29. In **Libya**, renewed fighting between the rival military groups is threatening the gains made by the MNJTF in the LCB and further worsening the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region as the conflict serves as source and safe havens for the terrorist fighters in the region.

30. In **Tunisia**, a National Naval Guard Officer attacked El Ghriba Synagogue. The attacker who was stationed at the National Guard Naval Centre in the port town of Aghir on Djerba, first attacked his colleague and took his ammunition. He then headed to the El Ghriba Synagogue, where he fired indiscriminately at security units near the synagogue. The attack resulted in the death of five people comprising, two security officers, two civilians, and the attacker. Tunisia requires national de-radicalization programmes focused on addressing negative extremist ideologies and build national cohesion to counter-terrorism.

31. **Southern Africa.** The Al Sunnah Wal Jammah (ASWJ), continues to generate insecurity in the North-eastern Mozambique province of Cabo Delgado. ISIS-central also continues to operate in the region and has claimed responsibility for attacks in Mozambique, in its Al-Naba magazine. While ASWJ has in the past focused its attacks on civilian targets, seemingly the group has shifted its modus operandi gearing toward winning the hearts and minds of the populace. Counter-terrorism operations in Cabo Delgado have dislodged terrorists from some of their strongholds around coastal districts of Palma and Macimboa da Praia. However, terrorists attacked districts such as Montepuez, a relatively stable inland district bordering Niassa province, Maidumbe district; and coastal districts including Macomia, Macimboa da Praia and Palma, and Montepuez all within the Cabo Delgado province. The attacks confirm a new pattern of violence that is shifting inland away from coastal districts, which were previously designated hotspots and currently have a high presence of military forces.

III. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

32. **Financing of Terrorism.** Terrorist and violent extremist groups need to generate funds to cover operational costs associated with actual terrorist attacks, including purchasing weapons, intelligence gathering, training, transportation and material costs. Al-Shabaab, for example, is reportedly generating most of its funds from extorted taxes they impose in areas under their control, ASWJ reportedly running an illicit trade economy taking advantage of illicit trade and trade routes that have been active between Cabo Delgado and Zanzibar even before the emergence of ASWJ insurgency. Active terrorist groups in the Sahel, JNIM, ISGS, ISWAP and Boko Haram also reportedly forging alliances with criminal syndicates to finance their operations making use of existing trade routes within their area of operation. So far, no concrete cases of use of crypto-currency were yet registered. In addition, while a number of terrorism related hostages were released, during the period under review, it is not yet clear whether any payment of Ransom has been made for their release.

33. **The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)/Drones.** Africa-based terrorist groups are increasingly embracing the new technologies of UAVs for surveillance purposes, propaganda

launching and conducting targeted attacks. Although high-technology military drones are reportedly still inaccessible to terrorists, the groups have resorted to using drones which readily available over the counter and cost-effective. ISWAP is reportedly using drones to shoot propaganda videos and surveillance against Nigerian forces while in Somalia Al-Shabaab is purportedly using drones for surveillance and launching attacks. To address this growing concern, Member States could develop UAV management mechanisms to oversee the procurement and deployment of these devices.

34. **The Use of Internet and Online Platforms.** Through cyber-enabled activities, terrorist and violent extremist groups have advanced their operations. The benefits of the internet have instigated access to information and effortless communication, which the terrorist and violent extremist groups exploit as a reliable means to deliver their propaganda for purposes of recruitment and radicalization, disseminating information, training of personnel, for accumulation, movements and storing of funds as well as planning operations. The anonymity associated with the use of the Dark Web and virtual currencies offers sanctuary to terrorist groups, which Africa-based groups could easily venture into.

35. **The Impact of Conflict in Sudan on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa.** The ongoing conflict in Sudan could become detrimental to peace and security in the continent. Sudan borders three terrorism hotspot regions of the Sahel, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa. Hence, an unstable Sudan could open yet another gateway to the illicit movement of goods and persons including terrorists, weapons and ammunitions to and from East, Central and North Africa, and has the potential to exacerbate terrorism and violent extremism across the continent. The anticipated proliferation of weapons emanating from arming belligerents could bare a wider regional outreach involving arming non-state actors operating in neighboring countries of Libya, Chad, Egypt, the DRC, Central Africa Republic and Kenya.

36. Also, given the country's history of violence and the presence of armed groups, the instability in Sudan could provide a conducive environment for global terrorist groups to infiltrate the country through existing armed groups, in particular, the Islamic State which has adopted an aggressive expansionist approach in Africa, consolidating by that its reach and presence across the wider Sahel Belt, from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. The deteriorating security situation in Sudan already provokes conflict-induced displacements, which could expose people to recruitment and radicalization by groups operating in neighboring countries.

37. **Border Security and Management.** Border insecurity and ill-management are major contributing factors to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. Porous borders facilitate the spillover effects of violence from one hotspot to neighboring countries as is the case in West Africa where violence is spilling from Mali to the coastal states of Benin and Togo at an alarming rate. Border insecurity facilitates the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, criminal activities financing terrorism, and illegal migration which are detrimental to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.

38. **Lack of State Capacity.** The inadequate national capacities provide a conducive environment for terrorists and violent extremist groups to operate. Through weak institutions, a vacuum in state authority and capacity is created which terrorist and violent extremist groups exploit to expand their activities. Member States lacking strong institutions and policies to address issues related to terrorism financing and money laundering, instill control measures over weapon management, amicably resolve conflicts and effectively prosecute cases related to terrorism and violent extremism, remain attractive to terrorism. Moreover, many states fighting terrorism are finding it challenging to reestablish their presence and some form of authority over territories they have successfully liberated from terrorists.

39. **Human Insecurity and Under-development.** The major threats to human security include inadequate infrastructure, unemployment, lawlessness, lack of health and education facilities, and limited access to food, sanitation and clean water. The inability of Member States to provide such basic needs and the eagerness of terrorist and violent extremist groups to identify and tackle some development deficits in their quest to win the hearts and minds of the people, make individuals susceptible to terrorism radicalization and recruitment.

IV. EFFORTS BY THE AU COMMISSION

40. The Commission continues to work to strengthen cooperation and partnerships among the Member States to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism. Sharing of criminal information and data, a list of terrorists, good practices and lessons learned is a critical area that remains a focus for both ACSRT and AFRIPOL.

41. Through the ACSRT, the Commission continues to build the capacities of Member States to respond to the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism. These efforts include the development and reviewing of national counterterrorism strategies and plans of action as well as the enhancement of Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (PC/VE) capacities. The ACSRT also continues to conduct periodic research studies and policy briefs to inform policy formulation and implementation at the level of Member States. During the reporting period, the ACSRT published various analysis reports and policy briefs, in addition to the production of the Monthly Terrorism Factsheet and Quarterly Terrorism Trends Analysis Report for the benefit of the Member States and relevant stakeholders.

42. The ACSRT organized a number of activities fully funded by partners, namely a roundtable on Integrating Responses to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in East and Southern Africa and on strengthening national and regional counterterrorism coordination mechanisms in Africa, with the US Based Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), National Course and Technical Workshop on the Prevention of Violent Extremism, Kinshasa, DRC, as part of a Swiss funded PVE Program. In addition, the Centre was invited to take part during the 5th Annual Global Security Forum; the Annual Conference on the Prevention of Violent Extremism, Jointly organized by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, UNOWAS and the CHEDS-Senegal; the 21st Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Coordinating Committee Meeting (CC21) and the Side Event on “*Local, National and Regional Efforts to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism*” and the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) closed briefing on transnational threats.

V. OBSERVATIONS

43. During the reporting period, the following can be observed:

- a. The political instability in the Sahel, including the 26 July 2023 coup d'état in Niger; coupled with the withdrawal of MINUSMA could further worsen terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel;
- b. The increased use of IEDs by many terrorist groups has become and will continue to be a cause of concern;
- c. There is continued reliance on FTFs by many local terrorist groups to benefit from their fighting experience and their expertise;
- d. There is increased use of commercially available technologies for terror purposes, such as Drones;

- e. Ongoing Conflicts provide a fertile ground for terrorism recruitment and financing, and also provide opportunities for terrorist groups to expand their operations;
- f. Resorting to the use of vigilante groups and mercenaries in fighting terrorism could worsen the already fragile security situation, dilute state authority and worsen relations between the State and its citizens.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

44. Whereas terrorism and violent extremism persist in the Continent, the political commitment of AU Member States is a testament to their determination to defeat terrorism and violent extremism.

45. The values of good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, inclusive of economic growth and social progress are not merely positive goals in themselves, but they are basic and essential ingredients to address the underlying conditions conducive to terrorism and violent extremism. Thus, combating terrorism requires full and scrupulous adherence to international human rights and rule of law standards.

46. Close cooperation and coordination with the private sector under a whole-of-government and whole-of-society, action-oriented and well-resourced approach will contribute to an effective and sustainable response. The borderless nature of the threat exposes the world to emerging forms of criminality and security threats that they are poorly equipped, both technically and financially, to detect, investigate and to respond to the threat.

47. There is also a need to look at cross-cutting issues that can have an impact on the current security situation in Africa, for instance to assess how Climate Change, Global Warming and Humanitarian issues can be exploited by Terrorism to their benefit, including the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russian Conflict in addition to the emergence and rapid development of new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) on terrorism and violent extremism in Africa.

VII. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

48. The following recommendations for consideration:

- i. Timely resolution of conflicts before attracting foreign actors and breeding fertile ground for terrorism and violent extremism;
- ii. Increase troop levels and enhance their intelligence capabilities in counter-terrorism operations. Efforts should also be made to improve the operational cooperation among the contingents;
- iii. Implement a comprehensive security sector reform programme in the countries that are currently experiencing terrorist activities. This should aim at enhancing the capabilities of the defense and security forces to effectively respond to terrorist threats;
- iv. Ensure that human security responses in prevention and countering terrorism complement the military approach to guarantee future stability;
- v. Expedite the establishment of a counter-terrorism unit within the African Standby Force (ASF) pursuant to relevant AU Assembly decisions;
- vi. Enhancing the capacity of the deployed troops on the detection and dismantling of IEDs and the possible disruption of such technology of the terrorist groups requires urgent attention;

- vii. Efforts to comprehensively address the root causes and drivers of terrorism and violent extremism is critical for sustainable prevention and combating of terrorism;
- viii. There is a need to mobilize the commitment of Africa's political elite, academia, civil society and private sector in preventing violent extremism and terrorism, through developing and disseminating counter-narratives in partnership with telecommunication companies;
- ix. Sharing and promoting best practices in the protection of communities, especially youth and women, against radicalization that leads to terrorism and violent extremism;
- x. At the continental level, develop a specific framework that will guide Member States to address the ever-growing use of the Internet for purposes of terrorism;
- xi. Operationalize the AU Ministerial Sub-Committee on Counter-Terrorism to discharge its mandate particularly in preparing, publicizing and reviewing a list of persons, groups and entities involved in terrorism;
- xii. Review the existing AU counter-terrorism legal framework in line with the existing International counter-terrorism legal framework; and
- xiii. Adequately funding for the relevant AU specialized institutions, the ACSRT and AFRIPOL, to effectively discharge their mandates which includes capacity building programmes to prevent and counter terrorism.

African Union Commission (AUC)

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PSC Outcomes

Communiqués

2023-08-22

Communiqué of the 1170th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 22 August 2023, on the Briefing on Continental Early Warning and Security Outlook.

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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