INAUGURAL JOINT CONSULTATION
BETWEEN THE AU PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL (PSC)
AND ECOWAS MEDIATION AND SECURITY COUNCIL (MSC) AT
AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL

PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF THE AU PSC BY
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REPRESENTATIVE OF NAMIBIA TO THE AU

SESSION 3:
“CONCERTED STRATEGY TO SUSTAIN ZERO-TOLERANCE FOR
UNCONSTITUIONAL CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT AND EFFECTIVE
COUNTER-TERRORISM”

ABUJA, NIGERIA, 24 MAY 2024
Co-Chairs;

Excellencies Members of the AU Peace and Security Council and the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council;

As we convene in Abuja, our focus is drawn to the Sahel, a region that has been affected by terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, and in addition to that, we have witnessed a number of unconstitutional changes of government in several countries in the Sahel region and West Africa. We are here to reflect on the profound challenges and responsibilities we face in securing a stable and secure Africa in the face of a significant and escalating terrorist threat, and the resurgence of coup d’etats.

Co-Chairs and Excellencies,

I will try to be brief, however, looking at the importance of these two topics, I kindly ask for your indulgence if I exceed the time allocated to me as I will speak on two weighty topics, namely terrorism and unconstitutional changes of government.

On Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism:

The landscape of terrorism on our continent has evolved dramatically, with the Sahel experiencing some of the most profound and devastating impacts. This meeting represents a critical juncture in our collective effort to address and counteract the burgeoning threat of terrorism and violent extremism that continues to destabilize our nations and hinder our progress toward peace and stability, and indeed, our attainment of Agenda 2063.

During the past two days, we had the High-Level Meeting on Counter-Terrorism here in Abuja, which brought together several stakeholders from across the continent to exchange views on how to address the terrorism threat in our continent. The AU PSC was pleased to be included in this gathering, as this is a common threat that the whole continent is concerned with addressing. The leadership of H.E Bola Ahmed Tinubu, President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, in organizing this meeting is another reminder that this matter is receiving the highest attention of our leaders. In addition to this meeting, the AU Commission has established the Accra Forum, which held its 2nd Meeting in Accra, Ghana in March 2024. This follows the May 2022 AU Extraordinary Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, that specifically focused on unconstitutional changes of government, and terrorism and violent extremisms. The AU Commission also continues to reactivate the Nouakchott and Djibouti Processes, in order to enhance intelligence sharing among Member States, which will augment our joint efforts. We understand that the western part of Africa has also established the Accra Initiatives. All these processes need to be well coordinated and to be fully supported.

From our side, the AU PSC has consistently held meetings to address the issues of terrorism and violent extremism, and our Communiques outline different actions to be implemented by various stakeholders, including Member States and Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms. It is important that we focus more on implementing our decisions as our organizations have sufficient tools aiming at addressing these challenges.

Despite all these efforts deployed, the scourge of terrorism remains.

According to our African Centre of the Study and Research on Counter-Terrorism based in Algiers, Algeria, in 2023 alone, Africa witnessed over 3,000 terrorist attacks, resulting in more than 15,500 deaths, with a significant proportion of these tragedies occurring within the Sahel region, profoundly impacting
Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, Nigeria, and Niger – Out of the ten countries most affected by terrorism globally, five are from Africa of which four countries are from the Western region of our continent. These numbers reflect a stark increase in both the frequency and the fatality of attacks, signifying a disturbing escalation in the capabilities and reach of terrorist factions. The Sahel, in particular, has been marked by an alarming surge in violence, with countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger bearing the brunt of these activities. These data remind us of the gravity of the issues and our responsibility to immediately address this challenge.

Frequent and severe terrorist attacks in these countries, compounded by political instability, including multiple coups, and critical humanitarian crisis, has created a precarious environment that facilitates the further entrenchment and spread of terrorist groups. These groups exploit local grievances, weak governance structures, and socio-economic disparities to recruit and expand their influence, blending traditional terror tactics with organized crime to fund their operations and enhance their operational capabilities.

Indeed, the collaboration between the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, in particular our Councils, is pivotal in addressing the complex and evolving challenges posed by terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa and the broader continent. Joint actions taken by these regional bodies can significantly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of counter-terrorism efforts.

Co-Chairs, at this juncture, allow me to propose some strategic joint actions for discussion:

A. An Integrated Intelligence Sharing Network:

- We need to enhance our intelligence-sharing platform that facilitates the real-time exchange of information between AU and ECOWAS member states. This was also emphasized during the African High-Level Meeting on Counter-Terrorism which just concluded yesterday.

- We also need to conduct regular joint training programs to enhance the analytical capabilities of intelligence personnel across member states. There is also a need for joint field Missions, and joint exercises and operations.

B. Capacity Building and Resource Sharing:

- We should Implement joint capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing the operational capabilities of security forces, including training in counter-terrorism tactics, counter-insurgency, and intelligence operations.

- We should also Facilitate the sharing of resources such as surveillance technologies, military equipment, and expertise to bolster the defensive and offensive capabilities of less equipped member states.

C. Strengthen Regional Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution:

- We need to Enhance diplomatic efforts to resolve ongoing conflicts and political instabilities that provide fertile ground for terrorism.

- We also need to Promote inclusive political processes and support reconciliation efforts that address grievances exploited by terrorist groups.
On Unconstitutional Changes of Government:

The AU Peace and Security Council is deeply concerned with the resurgence of coup d’états on the Continent. As a standing decision-making Organ on behalf of all AU Member States, the PSC has been consistent and firm on issues of military take overs and any other forms of UCG, in line with the AU instruments. The AU has a zero tolerance policy for unconstitutional changes of government, and that is what is guiding the PSC in its decisions. Furthermore, the PSC has been backing-up and supporting the decisions of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms, where possible, with regard to coup d’états. I want to emphasize here that the PSC’s efforts will continue to be sharpened and be enhanced.

Our two Councils therefore need to ensure that we fully collaborate and engage regularly, especially in situations where we need to make decisions when there is an unconstitutional change of government.

Our Continent faces a serious number of threats in the peace and security landscape, but the most critical issue to be considered is, the issue of governance at national levels. It is regrettable Your Excellencies, that in some circumstances we have been in denial and regard it as a taboo to admit that our governance structures are facing challenges that need to be addressed. This has largely been a result of the sensitivities about the interface between sovereignty and the AU instruments on democratic governance particularly Article 23 (5) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. If we don't diagnose the problem, we will not be able to treat it.

It is important to encompass governance in all its aspects including political, human rights, constitutional, economic management and socio-economic comprehensively.

Co-Chairs,

The PSC just established a Sub-Committee on Sanctions which will fully follow up on the implementation of the PSC decisions on UCG. We hope this Sub-Committee will also work with ECOWAS MSC in devising common approaches, and to ensure our decisions are coordinated and complement each other. The AU relies greatly on RECs/RMs to implement its decisions, and without the support of ECOWAS, it would have been hard to address the UCGs that have happened in this region. It is therefore important that the AU PSC and the ECOWAS MSC work hand-in-hand on the issue of unconstitutional changes of government.

Co-Chairs,

Excellencies,

In conclusion, to sustain our zero-tolerance for UCGs, and to eradicate terrorism and violent extremism, are two critical needs that both our Councils have been addressing through various measures. Therefore, our continued collaboration and coordination in implementing the solutions we have, is critical. The AU PSC therefore, stands ready to continue working together with ECOWAS.

I thank you Co-Chairs, Ladies and Gentlemen, and I appreciate you listening to me.
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Peace and Security Council
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