



IPU-UN Regional Conference

“Parliamentary engagement in addressing terrorism and conditions conducive to terrorism in the Sahel region”

Niamey, Niger, 12-14 June 2019

Organized jointly by the National Assembly of Niger, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Reference

For the past 20 years, the global parliamentary community has paid special attention to terrorism. Since 1996, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has adopted 12 resolutions¹ related to terrorism, which have all highlighted the need for cooperation with relevant UN organizations² in order to support the implementation of UN strategies, including the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. IPU Member Parliaments also unanimously adopted a resolution promoting this Strategy and committing to provide the legislative support required for the implementation of relevant UN resolutions.³

At the 137th IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg, the Russian Federation, in October 2017, the members endorsed the establishment of the parliamentary High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG). During the 140th Assembly in Doha in April 2019, the 21 Members selected by the six IPU Geopolitical Groups were elected along the two ex-officio members, namely the Presidents of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians and of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.

The regional conference for the Sahel countries is the second in a series of capacity-building activities carried out in the framework of the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Joint Programme. The first was held in Luxor, Egypt in February 2019, for the MENA countries.

The Joint Programme includes the institutionalization of the cooperation between the IPU, UNODC and UNOCT through the conclusion of a trilateral agreement that will serve as a basis for achieving several high-impact tangible outcomes. It also envisages the organization of two Global Parliamentary Summits in 2019 and 2022, the establishment of a Global Parliamentary Network, the development of the Legal Databases, the production of annual world parliamentary reports, and the design of a web-based platform, mobile application and toolkits. One of the key elements of the Joint Programme is the delivery of parliamentary capacity building.

The Databases with counter-terrorism legislation, case law, bibliography, strategies and treaties are already available on SHERLOC at: <https://sherloc.unodc.org>.

On 8 May 2019 at the IPU Headquarters in Geneva, the IPU Secretary General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) signed the trilateral agreement. The MoU between the IPU, UNODC and UNOCT responds to the aforementioned IPU resolutions adopted by IPU Member Parliaments over the past two decades. This MoU aims at turning those words into action and promote the parliamentary dimension to prevention and countering terrorism and addressing conditions conducive to terrorism and the role of IPU to support United Nations efforts towards peace

¹ IPU resolutions 1996/95; 2001/106; 2001/105; 2002/107; 2003/108; 2005/113; 2005/112; 2006/115; 2007/116; 2010/122;

² IPU resolutions 2001/05, para.4; 2002/107 paras 6 and 8; 2003/108, paras 24 and 34; 2005/112, para.13; 2006/115, para. 9; 2006/115, paras 10 and 12; 2006/132, paras 2, 5 and 11; 2016/134, para.26.

³ IPU resolution 2006/115.

and security. The trilateral MoU represents an acknowledgment from the United Nations of the important role of parliamentarians and parliaments in global counter-terrorism efforts.

2. Terrorism threat in the Sahel region⁴

Terrorism remains one of the most serious security threats worldwide and a security concern for all governments and parliaments.

ISIL and its affiliates continue to pose the main and most well-resourced international terrorist threat, while Al-Qaida remains resilient and active in many regions, including the Sahel, and retains the ambition to project itself more internationally. Although the level of inspired terrorist activity remains high, the number of ISIL attacks decreased by December 2018.

The foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) phenomenon remains serious, although the flow of FTF returnees and relocators has been slower than expected. Many are still fighting in ISIL ranks, while others are in various stages of detention, processing, transit, relocation and return. Most FTF in other conflict zones come from within those regions, rather than being returnees from the ISIL core.

FTF movement remain a concern for States in the Sahel region. Some Sahel countries report an increasing number of cases of fighters switching loyalties between various entities throughout the region. Some operate in a mercenary manner, switching between different groups, owing to financial incentives.

Most Sahelian terrorist groups have established formal links with ISIL or Al-Qaida. Terrorists are taking advantage of territorial control and ethnic conflicts to radicalize population and recruit. The financing of local Sahelian terrorist groups is growing, and there is a concern that radicalization is increasing the threat level.

The funding sources include kidnaping for ransom and theft and extortion by the hijacking of vehicles with their cargo. The predominance in the region of the cash economy, without controls, is conducive to terrorist groups funded by extortion, charitable donations, smuggling, remittances and kidnaping for ransom. ISIL- and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups in the Sahel benefit from “taxing” the flow of drugs, goods and individuals through the territory in which they are active.

As evidence by the recent reports of the United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities (S/2018/14/Rev.1, S/2018/705 and S/2019/50) the region is severely affected by activities of a number of terrorist organizations, including:

The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM) (or Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin) is the leading and most dangerous terrorist group in the Sahel, as well as one of the most efficient Al-Qaida affiliates. It has successfully combined regional terrorist groups in an Al-Qaida-affiliated coalition. While attacks are mostly focused on domestic and international defence and security forces and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), civilians are increasingly targeted. GSIM claimed many of these attacks, including the attacks against MINUSMA on 20 January and 20 April 2019.

The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) operates mostly at the border between Mali and Niger and represents a lower threat than GSIM. Both groups share the common goal of destabilizing the security situation in the region. Pressure on ISGS, and the lack of support from the ISIL core, has generated closer cooperation with GSIM, but not a merger. ISGS is connected to transnational crime, including at least the smuggling of automobile spare parts and illegal mining.

The Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), with 1,500 to 3,500 fighters operating in the tri-border area of the Lake Chad basin, is the strongest ISIL affiliate in Africa. ISWAP operational capability grew and mounted numerous attacks on military bases and towns. The group gained access to cash resources and military equipment, including weapons, ammunition and vehicles, and developed reconnaissance-drone capability. ISWAP propaganda is increasingly aggressive; online statements increased fivefold compared with the first half of 2018.

⁴ Based on the 21st (S/2018/14/Rev.1), 22nd (S/2018/705) and the 23rd report (S/2019/50) of the United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities.

Boko Haram continues to pose a significant threat, especially in Nigeria, Cameroon, the Niger and Chad. Its activities include abductions and forcing captives to serve as suicide bombers. For example, 2017 has seen an unprecedented high number of female suicide bombers used by Boko Haram. The overall number of people displaced as a result of attacks of Boko Haram and military operations is estimated around 10 million, as of 2017.⁵ The group has experienced military setbacks, and its ability to harass the population, sustain funding and seize equipment has been diminished.

3. Objectives, thematic focus and methodology

The overall objective of the conference is to support national parliaments to enhance understanding of their role in preventing and countering terrorism and addressing conditions to terrorism with a focus on priority areas specific to the regional context.

The regional conference will seek to:

- Promote the role of parliamentarians in addressing terrorism and conditions conducive to terrorism;
- Increase the awareness of parliamentarians about the role of the United Nations in preventing and countering terrorism and addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism;
- Raise awareness on existing regional counter-terrorism frameworks;
- Enhance cooperation between relevant parliamentary committees at the regional level and parliaments and the United Nations;
- Strengthen the exchange of good practices on addressing terrorism and conditions conducive to terrorism taking into account the regional context;
- Exchange good practices, analyze gaps and main elements of national counter-terrorism legislation and advise parliaments on follow-up action;
- Identify priorities for further support and guidance which parliaments might require from the United Nations and IPU at the national and regional level;
- Present the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Joint Programme, demonstrating the advantages and benefits it offers to parliamentarians;
- Contribute to the establishment of the Global Parliamentary Network on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

Lastly, the regional conference will also be an opportunity to hold initial discussions and brainstorming sessions ahead of the first Global Parliamentary Summit in order to collect recommendations from the participants.

The programme will be structured as follows:

- 1) Opening session
- 2) Terrorism threat in the Sahel region
- 3) Overview of recent developments in the international counter-terrorism obligations, especially the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the international conventions and protocols related to terrorism and relevant Security Council resolutions;
- 4) Presentation of the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Programme;
- 5) Presentation of existing regional strategies and mechanisms offered by various regional organizations such as the African Union, the G5 Sahel, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as the United Nations (i.e. the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel);
- 6) Existing gaps in CT legislation in the countries of the region;
- 7) Sessions (2 hours each) with a focus on the following themes:
 - Support to victims of terrorism;

⁵ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/08/1017542>

- Border security and management, and detection of terrorist movements, including through implementation of the API/PNR system;
- Gender dimensions of counter-terrorism responses;
- Terrorist radicalization and recruitment; and
- Building resilient communities;

8) Presentation of recommendations and closing.

The work in each session will include presentation by experts, exchange of national experiences and recommendations for follow-up actions at the national and regional level

Recommendations of each session will be presented at the plenary and will be published as an outcome document at the conference.

Pre-conference preparations:

- In order for the sessions to be interactive and informative, the participants are asked to bring copies of their national legislation, strategies, plans of action, policies and any other relevant documents related to the aforementioned themes.
- Furthermore, it would be appreciated if delegations specify to the organizers concrete priorities for support and guidance which they would expect to receive from the UN and IPU at the national and regional level.
- Delegations are welcome to send documents by email to Ms. Carmen Castillo at counter-terrorism@ipu.org and Ms. Clarita Montant peace@ipu.org.

4. Partners

The National Assembly, headed by the Honorable Ousseini Tinni, is presented as followed:

- 171 deputies elected by universal suffrage, free, direct, equal and secret;
- The office has 15 members in addition to the Speaker, including six Vice-Presidents, three Quaestors and six Parliamentary Secretaries;
- Six parliamentary groups federating 16 political parties;
- It holds two annual sessions of three months each;
- A general secretariat composed of three hundred and fifty agents completes its organization chart.

Since the beginning, the current legislature has been largely involved in searching for ways and means to fight against terrorism. Its committee responsible for security has always done the necessary advocacy work in order to ensure that the budget devoted to the security and defence of the territory was adapted to the needs of the fight against terrorism. At present, 15% of the state budget is spent on defence and security.

In addition, the Assembly has always positively welcomed the Government's requests to declare a state of emergency in some conflict zones. But, the decisive step was taken this past year by sending parliamentary missions to all regions of the country in order to raise awareness about terrorism among the population. In particular, it aimed at making them aware that the war against terrorism concerned everyone and that it was at the same time a local and national setback to economic and social progress.

Moreover, in order to increase the chances of success of the organization called G5 Sahel, the National Assembly of Niger, through its President, has taken the leadership in creating an inter-parliamentary committee, comprised of the representatives of the 5 assemblies of the G5 Sahel countries and open to the countries of the Sahel Alliance. This committee has just launched its activities with a first plenary assembly in Ouagadougou. Its mission is to follow the activities of G5 Sahel by giving opinions and recommendations.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union recognizes that terrorism and violent extremism generate complex and multidimensional, national, and global challenges which require global coordination and solutions. Through its 2017-2021 Strategy for a strong democratic parliament in the service of the people, the

IPU reaffirmed its commitment to promote democratic governance that reflects the collective will of the world parliamentary community, through its core values, equality, inclusiveness, respect, integrity and solidarity. More specifically, objective 4 of the IPU Strategy contributes to peace building, conflict prevention and security, and focuses on the role of parliaments in building peace and helping to prevent conflict by ensuring political reconciliation through dialogue, inclusiveness, fostering parliamentary diplomacy, and taking action on counter-terrorism and disarmament.

UNOCT is the lead United Nations counter-terrorism body and works to coordinate the United Nations efforts to support the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the Member States. Its main functions include: to provide leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates across the United Nations system; to enhance coordination and coherence to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the United Nations Global CT Strategy; to strengthen the delivery of UN counter-terrorism capacity building assistance to Member States; to improve visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for UN counter-terrorism efforts; and to ensure that due priority is given to counter terrorism across the United Nations system and that the important work on preventing violent extremism is firmly rooted in the Strategy.

UNODC, specifically its Terrorism Prevention Branch, is mandated by the General Assembly to provide legal and capacity building assistance to Member States for the ratification, legislative incorporation and implementation of the international legal instruments against terrorism. Further, one of UNODC's key priorities is to promote regional and international cooperation in criminal matters related to terrorism. UNODC's mandate, technical expertise, field level operational capacity and professional networks concerning serious crime, place it in a unique position to address the increasingly complex and multidimensional nature of terrorism in a coherent, comprehensive manner. UNODC possesses a network of field experts in both terrorism and other types of crime, who provide unique local, regional and global expertise and operational capacity for delivering technical assistance on the ground and is the largest global implementer of parliamentary strengthening programming. UNODC's Office for West and Central Africa (ROSEN) is based in Dakar covers 22 countries (15 in West Africa and 7 in Central Africa).

5. Participants

- Invited Parliaments: Chairpersons and members of relevant counter-terrorism and security parliamentary committees including from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Somalia.
- Members of the IPU High-Level Advisory on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG): Austria, Burundi, China, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Egypt, France, Italy, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Malaysia, Namibia, Niger, Pakistan, Switzerland, UAE, Uruguay, Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, Forum of Young Parliamentarians)
- Regional organizations: African Union, Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union, Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Legislative Assembly, Parliament of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA), Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF), Pan-African Parliament (PAP), African Parliamentarian Union (APU), G5 Sahel Secretariat, Lake Chad Basin Commission, etc.
- International organizations: relevant United Nations and other international organizations, including IPU (co-organizer), UNODC (co-organizer), UNOCT (co-organizer), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, etc.