



## IPU-UN Regional Conference for the countries of the Sahel region

### *Parliamentary engagement in addressing terrorism and conditions conducive to terrorism in the Sahel region*

Niamey, Niger, 12-14 June 2019

#### **FINAL DOCUMENT**

We, parliamentarians from the countries of the Sahel Region,<sup>1</sup> met here in Niamey, Niger, from 12 to 14 June 2019 for the IPU-UN Regional Conference on “Parliamentary engagement in addressing terrorism and conditions conducive to terrorism in the Sahel region”. The Conference was organized jointly by the National Assembly of Niger, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Conference was held within the framework of the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT efforts on countering terrorism and violent extremism, with the support of the IPU High-Level Advisory Group on Counter-Terrorism and Violent Extremism. We welcomed the successful cooperation between the IPU, UNODC and UNOCT through the Joint Programme.

For three days, we held detailed discussions on the role of parliaments in countering terrorism and conditions conducive to terrorism, with a focus on priority areas in the Sahel region.

We welcomed the active involvement of all the participants, who shared their experiences, national legislations and strategies, and described the challenges they encounter in closing the gap between international resolutions and national legislations. Overall, the regional conference afforded an opportunity to exchange best practices and to enhance cooperation between parliaments in combating terrorism and violent extremism. We also benefited from the wealth of contributions made by all the participants, including the IPU High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, and experts from the IPU and the UN and other organizations, such as the African Union, the African Parliamentary Union, the Timbuktu Institute and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Our discussions focused on four main themes: (1) the threat posed by terrorism in the Sahel region, and how the movements of terrorist groups affect security and border management, as well as on the need to work on prevention to eradicate radicalization and recruitment; (2) the importance of working at the regional level and cooperating for the implementation of national and regional strategies and mechanisms; (3) analyses of recent developments in international counter-terrorism obligations and the gaps in counter-terrorist legislation at national and regional levels; (4) the important role of parliaments in supporting victims of terrorism, taking into account the gender dimension and youth, and how these groups could have a positive impact on building resilient communities.

Recognizing the threat posed by these terrorist groups which operate in part of the territories of the countries of the region, we agree that these groups pose a continuing serious threat to development, peace and security both in the region and in neighbouring countries.

In that light, we reaffirm that terrorism should not be associated with any particular religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group, after having held a proactive discussion concerning the aforementioned themes and set down the conclusions and recommendations laid out below with a view to mobilizing parliaments to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism

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<sup>1</sup> Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Chad. Representatives of Austria, Italy and Kenya participated in their capacity as members of the IPU High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism.

1. The insecurity resulting from armed conflicts, terrorism and transnational organized crime renders the countries of the Sahel region increasingly vulnerable, and therefore impairs opportunities for achieving development. Concerted efforts by the governments and parliaments of the countries of the Sahel region are urgently required in order to tackle those challenges more effectively.
2. Greater engagement of parliamentarians is required in devising and implementing national and regional plans of action. In order to achieve this objective, parliamentarians can benefit from the technical assistance of UNOCT under the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Joint Programme.
3. Parliamentarians are also urged to allocate the necessary funding for promoting and facilitating the implementation of national and regional strategies on preventing violent extremism and combating terrorism, notably with the support of the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Joint Programme. They are urged to stimulate open public debate on combating terrorism so as to hear the people's views on the subject and have them reflected in the national and regional strategies.
4. The participants recognize the importance of ratifying and implementing the 19 international instruments on combating terrorism, and undertake to share with their parliaments the status of ratification of those instruments, which was distributed by the UN at the conference. They also undertake to intensify their efforts to ensure that their countries accede to those instruments.
5. The countries of the Sahel region have made significant progress as to updating their legislation and establishing institutional frameworks geared towards combating terrorism. However, the actual implementation of that legislation remains a major challenge and should be the focus of future action. Parliaments are urged to seek the UN's technical assistance under the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Joint Programme in order to fill any lacunae in their national legislations, particularly in regard to criminalization of terrorist acts, information sharing, the establishment of specialized institutions and national inter-institutional committees, the effectiveness of investigation methods and respect for the rule of law and human rights principles. In that regard, the participants welcomed the UNODC document on trends and possibilities concerning criminal justice measures against terrorism in West Africa: legislation and capacity building, which was presented at the conference.
6. Parliamentarians are urged to share with the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Joint Programme Secretariat, their legislations, strategies, documents and best practices on combating terrorism for purposes of compiling and circulating them, *inter alia*, by means of the SHERLOC database on counter-terrorism.
7. Parliamentarians are also called upon to enact adequate laws on support to victims of terrorism, including such reparations as the victims may require. Such laws must also contain provisions on protecting victims and affording them the means to reintegrate into society. In this respect, parliamentarians are also invited to work with communities to eliminate stigma of victims.
8. The participants recognize the importance of security and border management in preventing terrorist movements. Under the Joint Programme, parliaments are urged to reach out to UNODC and UNOCT for any assistance they may require in facilitating the drafting and implementation of measures concerning the collection and processing of data on advance passenger information (API) /passenger name records (PNR), as well as in drafting national plans on integrated border control and management, including monitoring migration flows. Depending on national needs, this could entail, among other things, performing evaluations, raising awareness, providing legislative support, establishing institutions, enhancing capacity, providing information and communication technology (ICT), as well as expertise.
9. In addition to their institutional role, parliaments are urged to seek local solutions to the conditions conducive to terrorism in order to have a real impact both on the ground and within their communities. Communities play a key role in preventing radicalization and violent extremism. Accordingly, parliaments are urged to lay emphasis on the role of traditional and religious leaders, as well as that of other key local players. In particular, the participants recognize the importance of building on the role and legitimacy of religious leaders so as to ensure that they become fully involved in raising awareness and prevention, in order to support the work of States and that of national, regional and international partners. The participants also recognize the importance of encouraging religious leaders to become involved in preventing the production of counter-speech. Local realities have to be taken into consideration when reinforcing respect for local cultures and their values. In this regard, the participants welcomed the handbook on best practices regarding community resilience against radicalization and violent extremism in the G5 Sahel States.

10. In cooperation with their governments, parliamentarians are urged to work towards promoting greater effective presence of the State in rural and border areas.
11. The fight against terrorism cannot be undertaken solely from a military standpoint. Accordingly, parliaments must endeavor to ensure that governments do more to eradicate the underlying causes of terrorism, notably by promoting the adoption of policies conducive to good governance, providing socio-economic opportunities and education, building infrastructure and developing the rural areas
12. Nearly two thirds (65%) of the people in the countries of the Sahel region are under 25 years of age. With that in mind, the participants focused their attention on the radicalization and recruitment of terrorists among the youth. It is crucial for parliamentarians to do their utmost to support any and all public policies that are aimed at addressing unemployment among the youth and offering them alternatives through vocational training, as well as sports and cultural programmes. Accordingly, education must be at the heart of the fight against terrorism.
13. The parliamentarians undertake to promote the adoption of adequate holistic measures and policies on the prosecution, rehabilitation and reinsertion of persons linked to terrorism, including foreign terrorist combatants, in accordance with the UN Security Council's 2015 Madrid Guiding Principles and the 2018 Addendum thereto.
14. Parliaments are urged to promote empowering women and women's active involvement in making decisions, as well as in developing strategies, plans of action and initiatives on countering violent extremism, taking into account, *inter alia*, any acts of sexual and gender-based violence.
15. The participants condemn the terrorists' recruitment and systematic use of children, and emphasize that children of members of terrorist groups should be treated in accordance with the applicable international human rights standards, with the best interest of the child being the paramount consideration.
16. The parliamentarians recommend that the United Nations take into account the G5 Sahel Joint Force, as per Chapter 7 of the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we very much welcome the implementation of the IPU-UNODC-UNOCT Joint Programme on countering terrorism and violent extremism which aims to reduce the gap between the implementation of the international resolutions and national legislations, and we recognize it as a basis enabling us to actually put the final conclusions into practice.

Lastly, in order promote the participation of parliaments in the United Nations, we request the IPU to circulate our final document to the members of the global parliamentary community during the 141<sup>st</sup> IPU Assembly due to be held in Belgrade, Serbia, from 13 to 17 October 2019. We also request the National Assembly of Niger to take the necessary action to obtain recognition of the final document as an official UN General Assembly document and to circulate it to the relevant bodies.