

## Regional Technical Workshop on Disengagement and Rehabilitation of Violent Extremist for North Africa and the Sahel Country in the Field

27 – 28 February 2013



Opening Remarks of Ambassador Francisco Caetano José Madeira, AU Chairpersons' Special Representative for Counterterrorism Cooperation/Director of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)

Your Excellency Ambassador Rezag Bara,  
Adviser to H.E President Bouteflica,

Your Excellencies Heads of diplomatic Missions accredited to the Democratic People's Republic of Algeria,

Your Excellency Mr. Gilles de Kerchove,

Dr. Jonathan Lucas,

Dear Participants, Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with great satisfaction that I welcome you to the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism.

My joy is even greater when I realize that you had to put aside your many important duties to spare time to join us here as we start our Regional Technical Workshop for North Africa and the Sahel region on Disengagement and Rehabilitation of Violent Extremists jointly organized between the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) .

We are meeting at a moment when our sub region remains engulfed in an environment polluted by different forms of extremism, including violent religious extremism and intolerance, where negative forces are exploiting the limits of territorial jurisdiction of our states and the porosity of our borders to position themselves strategically in our countries. We are meeting at a moment when the region is busy trying to contain and put out of commission the terrorist groups that had taken control of more than half of the Malian territory. We encourage these efforts and it is our ardent desire to soon see Mali liberated and pacified. We look forward to a moment when Malians will sit together around a negotiating table to iron out the genuine problems that divide the Malian people. We congratulate the Algerian government for having been able to neutralize one of the most daring terrorist attacks in their history. These realities are a strong reminder that terrorism is a serious problem in our continent and remains a global threat to international peace and security.

Your Excellencies,

Until recently, most of our counter terrorism effort was directed to issues related to building capacity for effective law enforcement and prosecution, international cooperation, border control, financial law and practice and bringing terrorists to Justice. Not that these activities are not important and necessary in the fight against terrorism. They were as relevant then as they are today.

The point is that the evaluation missions the ACSRT undertook to most of the Sahel countries, have allowed us to be in direct contact with the reality of terrorism and the way it manifests itself on the ground.

as we moved on in our mission to study, research and provide our continent with the requisite information, analysis, expertise, scientific and operational capacity and strategy to successfully cope with the many threats that Terrorism continues to pose, we realized that There was a

serious deficit in capacity to counter acts of incitement to extremism and radicalization leading to violence.

Countering the appeal of terrorism emerges as a priority on the African continent. There is need for member states to scale up efforts to identify radicalization warning signs early enough and proactively adopt appropriate responses that will avert the phenomenon which, if allowed to appear and thrive, will require redoubled effort and huge resources to eradicate. Most of our countries simply do not possess these resources.

Terrorism is complex in that it is more than a normal criminal act committed for material or personal gain; it is wound up with ideological factors, social grievances, unresolved conflicts, politics, personal identity, religion, history, marginalization, exclusion and a lot of other factors. Society's inability to properly and effectively rise up to the challenges posed by these factors eventually lead to the emergence of hotbeds for the spread of violence and recurrent insecurity and instability. Such a situation usually contributes to the creation of an enabling environment for radicalization, where extremist and intolerant philosophical, political, religious, nationalistic and ethnic theories, ideologies and movements thrive and terrorism becomes appealing to some as an instrument of political activism.

Clearly, law enforcement, military action and intelligence operations, though necessary, do not suffice to contain this sociopolitical phenomenon.

Counter terrorism extends beyond disruption of terrorist activities, bringing the terror suspects to justice or having national counter terrorism strategies. The complexity of the phenomenon demands a holistic approach. Addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism through dialogue, justice, inclusiveness, governance, education and others, is as important as repressing terrorist acts and arresting terrorists through law enforcement. Countries are called to adopt upstream prevention measures and downstream rehabilitation programs. Countries must focus on cutting ideological support of terrorist groups as well proactively counter-radicalize their sympathizer base. Promoting development, religious tolerance, dialogue and understanding are all part of this holistic approach.

It is in this context that the ACSRT organized last year two workshops on radicalization, violent extremism and deradicalization, one for North Africa and the Sahel Countries and the other for East Africa and the Horn of Africa Countries. They were part of the African Union's continental and regional effort to prevent and combat violent extremism and terrorism. They brought together government representatives, religious leaders counter terrorism practitioners and members of the civil society. during three consecutive days delegates tried to look into radicalization situations, identify radicalization warning signs and proactively analyze available policy responses, programs and their impact with the view to thwarting the elements conducive

to radicalization and terrorism. They came up with solid recommendations which we published in one volume of our counter terrorism journal.

The workshop we are starting today is a joint effort by the United Nations and the African Union to strengthen the capacity of the countries in the field (pays du Champ) to effectively de-radicalize and protect citizens from being radicalized in prison settings. The aim of the workshop is to provide member states with expertise, practical knowledge and experience on key issues and challenges related to the protection of inmates from radicalization and the disengagement and rehabilitation of violent extremists in prison settings, based on the Good Practices on Disengagement and Rehabilitation of Violent Extremists Offenders adopted by the GCTF in June 2012. This is a relatively new approach in our counter terrorism work. Participants, who are a mix of policy makers and practitioners in the criminal justice and correctional services, will share with each other their country's experience and challenges in trying to address this phenomenon. UNICRI and prominent personalities including theologians, psychologists and other experts in relevant areas of knowledge, will lead us in unraveling the mysteries of radicalization and de-radicalization in prison settings. Once again, I welcome you to the African Centre for the study and Research on terrorism. Thank you.