

## 14<sup>th</sup> Focal Points Meeting of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)



**9 February 2021:** The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) held its 14th ACSRT Annual Focal Points Meeting from 8th to 9th February 2021.

The FP meeting aims at analysing the current situation of Terrorism and Violent Extremism on the African continent to map the way forward for more concrete coordination and cooperation among the African Union Member States.



In his opening remarks, Mr. Idriss Mounir Lallali, Ag. Director of the ACSRT, thanked the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the commitment and leadership it has continued to demonstrate in the efforts towards the prevention and fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the African continent. He also thanked the Focal Points, for their dedication and commitment in fulfilling their mission of preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, in particular during these exceptional times, where the world is facing an invisible threat that has taken thousands of lives and impacted our daily life, way of working and interacting and have put an additional burden on individual and collective stability, security, development and prosperity.

He cautioned that while many analysts assumed that the calamities linked to COVID-19 would impact on terrorist activities, in particular in Africa, resulting in de-escalating violence, the opposite has actually happened, as reports on terrorism in Africa, have indeed highlighted increasing violence by extremist groups to exploit the COVID-19

pandemic as an opportunity to advance their agendas, consolidate their positions, entrench their roots into communities, extend their tentacles, and attract new members to expand their support base and strengthen their ranks. From January to November 2020, the Continent recorded a total of 1,878 terrorist attacks resulting in 8,211 deaths, of which 1,778 terrorists. 59% of the attacks were against Civilians, 35% were against Military and Security Personnel, while 6% of the attacks were split equally between government Institutions and International Organizations. Civilians continue to bore the brunt of terrorist attacks representing 63% of casualties, followed by Security and Military personnel with 31%.

He indicated that despite the increasing international campaign and support against these criminal groups in Africa the operational capabilities and logistical support of the terrorists and violent extremists are yet to be degraded.

He also expressed concerns over the continued payment of ransom to terrorists for the release of hostages, despite the AU's Decision to criminalize the payment of Ransom, which he considers as a form of terror financing. More worryingly, he noted concerns over the new tendency of releasing of terrorists in exchange for hostages. Which can only be a recipe for disaster and can only contribute to perpetuating the terrorist threat, expansion and lethal capacity against Africa and its Member States.

While the COVID-19 pandemic poses multitudes of challenges to the peace and security landscape, it also provides us with opportunities to harness our efforts towards working decisively to end violent conflicts on the continent and address their root causes. We need to think outside the box and allow ourselves the space to engage in innovative ways to Silencing the Guns in Africa, even those guns carried by Terrorists and Violent Extremists

The two-day webinar meeting is gathered the ACSRT's National and Regional Focal Points from African Union Member States, Regional Economics Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanism (RMs) including the Sahel Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL Sahel) and the African Union Mechanism for Police Co-operation (AFRIPOL).

The meeting concluded with renewed commitment and strengthened determination to work ever closer in coherent and effective manner in providing a comprehensive response to terrorism and violent extremism.