



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Confederation

Summary Report

**First Regional Senior Course on the Prevention of Violent
Extremism (PVE) for Economic Community of Central African States
(ECCAS) Member States**

**August 6-9, 2019
Yaounde ,Cameroon**





Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Summary Report

First Regional Senior Course on the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) for Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Member States

**August 6-9, 2019
Yaounde, Cameroon**

Table of Contents	
<i>Box:</i> Note on the reporting method and methodology of the Course	p.3
I. Introduction	p.3
<i>Box:</i> The African Union, its framework, and the ACSRT	p.4
<i>Box:</i> "Regional Conversations for the PVE" - an initiative between Switzerland and Africa	p.5
II. The first regional Senior PVE Course in Central Africa	p.5
<i>i. Concept and challenges</i>	p.5
<i>ii. Objectives</i>	p.6
<i>iii. Methods and Resources</i>	p.6
III. PVE Themes	p.7
<i>Box:</i> The structure of the regional Course on PVE	p.7
• Understanding the drivers of VE and the motives behind joining a VE group	p.7
<i>Box :</i> From Hope to Violence	p.8
• Regional and national PVE frameworks	p.8
• The PVE Approach and Human Security	p.8
• Dialogue as a PVE tool	p.9
• The role of Political Actors in PVE	p.9
• The role of Justice in PVE	p.10
• The role of Defense and Security Forces in PVE	p.10
• The role of women in PVE	p.10
• The role of the media in PVE	p.11
• The role of the private sector in PVE	p.11
• The role of research in PVE	p.11
• Self-defense groups	p.11
• Victims and ex-recruits	p.12
IV. Assessment and Conclusions	p.12
<i>Box:</i> Some pointers to initiate a PVE action	p.14
Appendix - Useful references	p.15
Note from Course Directors	p.16

I. Introduction

Violent extremism knows no borders. In one way or another and at different times and degrees, all African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) experience this phenomenon. The links which unite the various armed groups which come under the banner of Violent Extremist, national or transnational, are, for many, known. What is less so is the geographical dynamic of its development, particularly in Central Africa where nearly half of ECCAS member countries are directly affected, in different forms.

While understanding of the activities of armed extremist groups is gradually improving in the Sahel, West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin, thanks to the work of researchers and exchanges between government officials, locals, armed forces and members of civil society, the recent manifestations of extreme violence in Central Africa (in particular in the DRC, CAR, Cameroon and Chad) raise the legitimate concerns of governments and societies in the region.

These concerns are based in particular on the continuation of Boko Haram activities and its potential ramifications on the whole region; the presence of a significant number of active armed groups in the CAR (about twenty, which control 80% of the national territory and which have many foreign mercenaries in their ranks); the presence of the Lord Resistance Army; the abuses committed by a growing number of various armed groups in the eastern part of the DRC (whose main group is Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) - a rebel group of Ugandan origin which claims to be of Islamic State); VE groups' capitalization on the poorly protected wealth of several countries in the region; and the existing links between all types of trafficking, cross-border banditry, local or regional politicians, possible presence of foreign Defense and Security Forces (DSFs) and armed movements.

In addition, the emergence and spread of these armed groups and their propaganda are facilitated by large-scale existence of enabling factors including, inter alia: fragility; historical background; rise in unemployment and the reduced socio-economic opportunities (also under the pressure of poorly controlled demographic growth); inadequate development of essential infrastructure; inter-religious and inter-community tensions; latent, unresolved, or poorly resolved conflicts; numerous governance gaps; the lack of a culture of dialogue; and socio-political grievances.

While most of Africa's four sub-regions receive relatively high attention - reflected in the large volume of resources allocated to numerous programs to fight terrorism, and sometimes prevention of violent extremism (PVE), unfortunately, this is not the case for its Central region. It should also be noted that the capacities of the regional States to respond to the threat varies.

Note on the Reporting Method and Methodology of the Course

We made the editorial choice not to present the work of this First Regional Course on PVE in Central Africa as a lecture, but to make room and pay tribute to the exchanges that the thematic introductions made by the facilitators of the different modules have fostered. This was the aim of the persons in charge of the Course methodology and work program, when arranging such space for exchange. The subjects reflected below are therefore addressed taking into account both the framing contributions and the debates, rich in exchanges of experience and open-ended questions.

We hope that this reading will be as informative and stimulating as this "Course-Meeting" was.

In view of those considerations, the **African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism of the African Union (ACSRT)**, located in Algiers, see box) initiated, in partnership with the **Human Security Division (HSD) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) of Switzerland** and with the support of the **African Center for International, Diplomatic, Economic and Strategic Studies (CEIDES)**, this First Regional Course on the Prevention of Violent Extremism for the benefit of **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Member States**. The course was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from August 6 to August 9, 2019.

The African Union, its framework and the ACSRT

The African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was established as a structure of the African Union Commission, in accordance with the provisions contained in section H, paragraphs 19 to 21 of the African Union Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa (2002). The objectives set at its creation were to assist African countries in building and strengthening their capacities for the prevention and fight against terrorism, as well as to act as a monitoring and early warning tool and complement international action by strengthening cooperation between African countries in these areas. Subsequent decisions by AU political bodies extend this mandate to the prevention and countering of violent extremism.

The AU Commission, through the ACSRT, works towards:

- Strengthening the capacities of Member States to prevent and fight against terrorism and violent extremism (strategies and POA, training, advice, etc.);
- Promoting a better interaction and institutional coordination at national and regional levels and a better development of the Early Warning Mechanism;
- Improving the political and legal framework for preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism;
- Conducting and promoting research on issues related to terrorism and violent extremism.

This Course, by promoting a multidimensional approach based on the concept of "Human Security" to eradicate VE and terrorism in the Member States of the African Union, is in line with this ACSRT mandate.

If this first regional Course for the PVE in Central Africa was a great success, it is probably because, in this tense security context, ECCAS MS have noted that the exclusively military solution adopted to combat these groups has now shown its limits and that it is therefore advisable to associate, in their strategies, all the components of society for multi-dimensional responses.

They are joined in this by the experience and aspirations of all those who, since 2016, participated in the initiative of "**Regional Conversations for the Prevention of Violent Extremism**" (see box). This cycle of meetings initiated by the Swiss FDFA with various partners has since brought together practitioners from North Africa, West Africa, and Central Africa for what has become a real call to question this violence differently. The partnership between the initiators of this First Regional Course is also part of the spirit of this initiative.

The "Regional Conversations for the PVE", an initiative between Switzerland and Africa

Following the adoption of the United Nations Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (2016), the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) of Switzerland has made this topic a priority (*). The Human Security Division is the competence Center of the FDFA which implements its political priorities in the areas of peace and human security. It has therefore since undertaken a series of advocacy activities in favor of this prevention approach centered on the causes of violence and the alternatives that can be provided, and it mobilizes its experts to carry out activities with its partners in the field.

In particular, in 2016, with several other partners, it launched the “*Regional Conversations for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Sahel-Sahara*” initiative, for which it has since ensured the facilitation and coordination, while providing it with its expertise.

The initiative now has around twenty meetings, including the major events in Dakar (2016), N'Djamena (2017) and Algiers (2018), the various thematic or sub-regional meetings in Dakar, Yaoundé, Abidjan, Maroua , Ouagadougou, Bangui, or the public round tables in New York, Geneva and Dakar. To date, this space for dialogue has brought together more than a thousand personalities from various professional backgrounds from North, West and Central Africa.

The objective is both to offer an informal space for exchange and dialogue on the prevention approach, to strengthen the links between different actors, to highlight and strengthen positive initiatives representing concrete alternatives to VE, and to contribute to the capacity building of actors engaged in the PVE within the scope of their duties and within their communities.

The motto of the initiative is: "Investing in peace to prevent violent extremism".

The African Union ACSRT is a partner of the initiative and has joined forces with the Swiss FDFA for the launch of this 1st regional Course for the PVE.

(* The Swiss FDFA adopted in April 2016 a Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism–
<http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/43587.pdf>

II. The First Regional Senior PVE Course in Central Africa

The course saw the participation of 52 high-level officials, administration executives from the military and security, political representatives and members of civil society from the eleven ECCAS MS. It addressed the security, social and political situations of the participating countries and at the transnational levels using new political and participatory approaches.

i. Concept and challenges

In fact, the preventive approach invites us to take a different look at the violence perpetrated by the so-called violent extremist groups: it is not about discussing the best way to eradicate these actors of violence, but considering how to eradicate the shortcomings that emanate from within our societies and give rise to such violence (“the causes” of violence).

This Course is therefore based on the observation that while the response to violent extremism and terrorism has until now been essentially of a military and security nature, it is increasingly accepted that in order to ensure an effective response, an arsenal of tools that also take into account, in addition to its consequences, the causes of VE, must now be adopted.

The other fundamental change in perspective called for by this preventive approach relates to the deep meaning that is given in our contemporary societies to the term “security” and the

revealing that this violence perhaps constitutes a need of “human security” which ensures the populations the protection of their being and their property by the State as the holder of public force.

Thus, if these causes of violence have in common social, political, economic exclusion, or its sentiment, the response will need to mobilize inclusion. If security is to place the human being at its center, it will be necessary to ensure with this human being that security governance meets their needs. It is therefore understandable that the common tool for this preventive approach, focusing its efforts on the root causes of VE and on a human security-based approach, will be dialogue.

However, this approach is not yet well developed in State practice. It requires capacity-building efforts, in the form of training courses, awareness-raising workshops, dialogue platforms, etc. This first regional PVE Course in Central Africa therefore meets this need.

ii. Objectives

The Course had the following objectives:

- Strengthening the understanding by participants of the nature and manifestations of VE in Africa and in the ECCAS region in particular, in order to better identify the root causes of its appearance and development and understand the different logics behind joining violent extremist groups;
- Strengthening the understanding of the links between the forms of violence that are VE, terrorism and transnational organized crime, and the links between these and other forms of violence, including unresolved or latent conflicts;
- Promoting the preventive approach consisting in acting on the causes of VE, as a response to violence, bearing in mind the need to invest in the construction (strengthening) of peace, rather than in repression ;
- Strengthening the knowledge of participants on the existing political and legal frameworks in the prevention and combating terrorism and VE;
- Acquiring the tools that give shape to a PVE action, in particular the concept of human security, inclusive dialogue as an instrument for preventing violence, the role of research in the PVE, the role of the State and that of the various PVE actors (political actors, actors of the security sectors, justice and defense, religious figures, family, women, communities, media...).

iii. Methods and Resources

The methodology of the Course was based on the initial inputs of the various facilitators and on group work, discussions and role-plays. It helped broadening the participants’ perspectives as a result of their mix, in view of their diverse socio-professional profiles (security, defense, intelligence, justice, political decision-makers, civil society organizations, etc.). There were exchanges of experiences on the successes, difficulties, failures and opportunities of being involved in the prevention of VE.

The regional scope of the Course, conducted in English and French, has also provided it with an intrinsic added value, by allowing a better understanding of the transnational dimension of

the VE phenomenon and its causes, and by promoting a more rich exchange of experiences drawing on a large circle of practitioners and professionals from the ECCAS region.

This methodology based on diversity and exchange thus offered a real opportunity to experiment dialogue, as well as a multi-stakeholder approach, tools which are also at the heart of the prevention of violence approach.

The richness of the Course was that of its participants, but also of the resource persons on whom it was able to rely to supervise and support the work. The initiators of the Course the ACSRT of the African Union and the Swiss FDFA, were joined by experts from Chad, the National Defense College Nigeria, the Center for Advanced Studies in Defense and Security (CHEDS, Senegal), the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KA IPTC, Ghana), the African Center for International Diplomatic, Economic and Strategic Studies (CEIDES, Cameroon), the University of Maroua (Cameroon), as well as from MediaWomen4Peace (Cameroon), Interpeace (Switzerland/Kenya), ECCAS, UNOCA, UNESCO and UN Women.

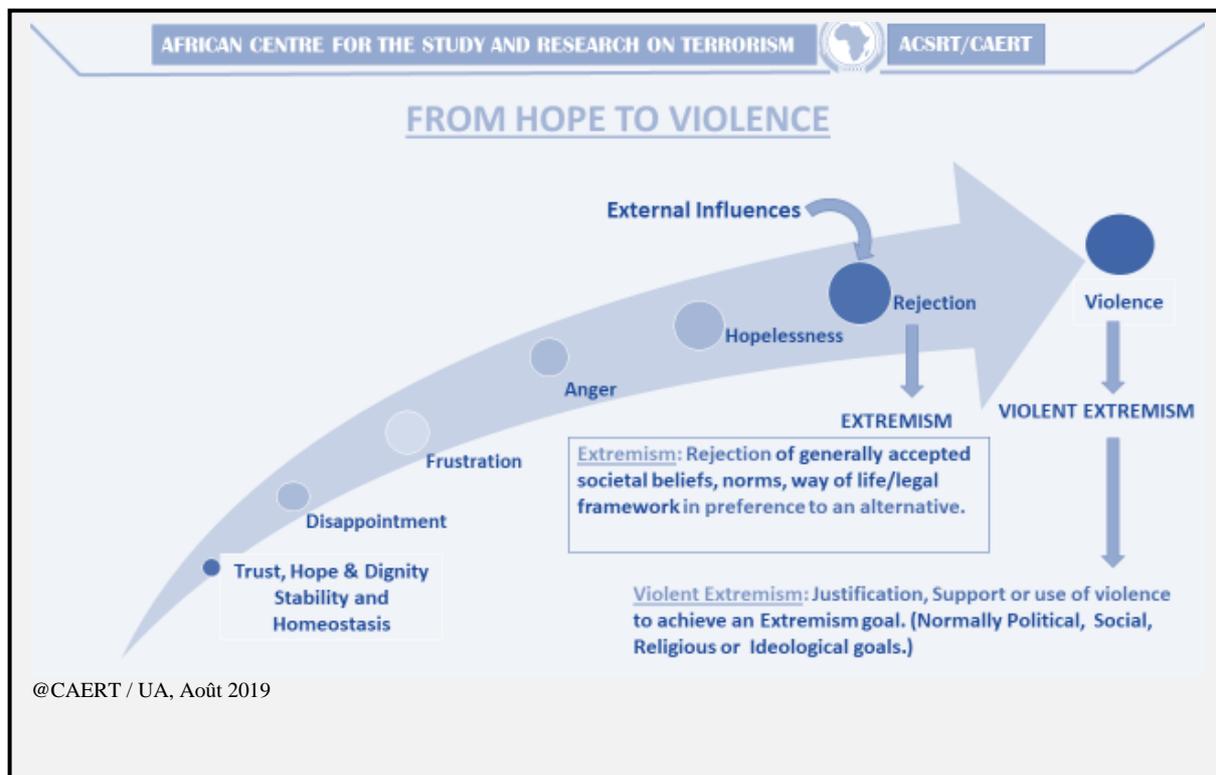
III. PVE Themes

Many important questions were addressed and considered as priorities by the Course’s participants and the facilitators:

■ It is important to understand **the drivers of VE and the motivations of those who join (or leave) violent extremist groups**, in order to think about an approach based on dialogue and prevention. This question was the subject of an interesting study by the University of Maroua. Interviewed in prison, 584 detainees who participated in Boko Haram activities (including 19% Christians and animists), and who surrendered themselves to the Cameroonian authorities, expressed themselves in very different ways about their involvement. Each case is different, but many joined as an **“emotional reaction”** following injustices or abuses committed by the State, most often repeatedly. The feeling of revenge against authority or the social environment, the protection of the family and its property and/or the search for rapid gains are the main motivations for joining VE groups. Recruitment was, in most cases, voluntary and, more often than not, incited either by the family itself or by a recruiting agent, coming from the same social group and whose religious ideology covered with a moral veil an extremist and violent engagement (the Islamic reference or the ideal vision of the great Empire of Kanem-Borno were common). Fleeing from the extremist group (or refusing to join it) also follows a very personal journey. It cannot be generalized.

<p>The structure of the regional course for the PVE</p> <p>The Course is structured around 6 main blocks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Analysis of the terrorist threat and VE in Africa.2. Understanding the drivers of VE (economic, political, social and cultural factors) and motivations for joining a VE group.3. VE prevention approaches (Human Security, “All-of-Government” and “All-of-Society” approach, international and regional approaches).4. PVE tools (research, dialogue, community resilience, education, gender, evaluation).5. PVE stakeholders (political actors, defense and security forces, justice, self-defense groups, women, media, private sector).6. Case study.
--

■ The establishment and implementation of **Regional and National PVE Frameworks** in Central Africa was part of the Course’s program. The weakness or absence of such plans and strategies in a sub-region, where the persistence or the increase of the danger is not contested, necessitated the development, revision, and implementation of Strategies and/or Plans in



respective MS (Chad and CAR). The participants called for the development of a Regional Action Plan for the ECCAS region in accordance with the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action and the AU’s relevant instruments. A final practical exercise (Case Study) was organized on the last day of the training whereby the participants were divided into four balanced groups according to their profiles. They were tasked to analyze in depth the UNSG Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2016), and answered six questions, aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills for the development and implementation of effective PVE policies and programs in their respective countries.

■ The PVE approach through a vision of “**human security**”, and not only “security”, is relatively recent: since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), security has been considered a prerogative of the State, which allows the use of force primarily to protect the territory, executive power and institutions. It is only in recent decades that the protection of the population and good governance, respect for human rights and social cohesion have become essential to protect all citizens and their rights. Peace and consideration for human dignity have since been at the heart of the principle of security, applied to human beings. It is now acknowledged that human security is everyone's business and that it comes at multiple levels. It concerns all sectors of society because “the State is a matter for all”. In this context, it was recognized that violent extremists are an integral part of our societies (despite their rejection of the political system they are fighting), and that eventually, it will be necessary to agree on reintegrating them into the national life despite the violence or the means they use to achieve their ends. "Even President Trump is negotiating with the Taliban," it was argued as other participants wondered how many deaths it would take to start a negotiation. Violent groups

express a deep social malaise and suggest a different type of governance. It is therefore the responsibility of governments to identify the problems that motivate this violence and respond to them effectively.

■ **Dialogue** as a tool for bringing together people who engage in violence against each other and as a component of the PVE, was the subject of wide-ranging debate. Based on the principle that everyday actions have an influence on the community, dialogue was considered a deeply useful and effective communication tool. Each person is a bearer of hope and must be able to engage in dialogue. In communication, you need a sender and a receiver, you need consent and signals (speech). Every party comes with what it has and tries to listen to what others, as in the examples presented by participants from Gabon (government–labor dialogue), the Republic of Congo (interventions of the Mediator of the Republic) and of Chad (National framework for political dialogue-CNDP and inter-religious days of prayer).

Culturally, identifiable humanist principles in all systems of society are deviated and result in violent extremism when identity and cultural affirmation markers are used to obtain social, economic and political positions. The examples of Boko Haram in Nigeria-Cameroon-Chad-Niger, the Seleka and anti-Balaka in CAR, the Anglophone crisis in the North-West and South-West Cameroon areas were mentioned in this regard. To cope with situations of violence, political solutions must be sought and favored insofar as violent extremism exploits identify specificities to support its political demands. It starts with dialogue with the actors of violence themselves, where possible, and also applies to dialogue within society in general. In any case, these solutions should, while remaining focused on cultural differences, be geared more towards the promotion of education, awareness, targeted educational talks and citizenship. This work of dialogue, of sharing, of refusing verbal violence and promoting non-violence must begin at an early age, at school and in the family, this was recalled on numerous occasions, so as to ensure that the model of social success is not defined by the actors of violence, nor by those who abuse their positions of authority.

■ **Role of political actors in the PVE:** It was stressed that this was a “very serious matter dealt with in a less serious manner.” By taking the example of the proliferation of weapons, often of very recent manufacture, in Central Africa, specific questions were asked: where do they come from? While it is estimated that more than two million small arms and light weapons are circulating around Lake Chad, what are government services doing to block these movements? Who owns these stocks? Who controls their source markets? Do the States take these matters seriously, matters that are crucial for the security of the populations? What are the laws that govern these matters in each country? Are they enforced? This lack of transparency generates a dangerous insecurity which is incompatible with a peaceful society. The collective and individual responsibility of each is therefore engaged.

In response to violence, political actors and their parties, must be interrogated and made responsible: what do they control? What do they do? Are some of them linked to the extremists? Are they using them for electoral purposes? Do they ensure the enforcement of the laws they themselves have passed? Do they have a clear political agenda on these issues? Moreover, are the military who manage the war really apolitical? It was said that a city was represented by the entire population. A Police Commissioner is involved in politics whereas armed defense is politics conducted by other means. Politics therefore concerns all citizens and not just “professional politicians”. Hence, it is important to give a stable status to the political opposition in parliaments so that on-compliance with basic societal principles does

not lead to violence and that democratic control can take place. Living together is politics and actively combating violence and hatred, even more so.

Besides, the responsibility of the political actors was also raised in connection with the management of the public good for the public good, as it is recognized today that the shortcomings in terms of democratic governance are also at the heart of causes of despair, which push some into the deadly arms of violent extremism.

■ These various matters, quite naturally, also raised that of the **role of justice** in the enforcement of laws (need for rigorous and empathetic work on the part of judges, the follow-up to judgments, presence of competent judges where extreme violence disrupts people's lives), a recurring problem throughout the region. Indeed, aren't the frustrations linked to a failing or even dependent justice also at the origin of resorting to violence?

■ when it comes to preventing violent extremism, the **Defense and Security Forces (DSF)** have a crucial role to play, as everyone agrees. However, conflicts between its different components, the lack of coordination between the DSFs of the States concerned, the mistrust and secrecy surrounding military action, corruption, often, the politicization of high-ranking officers, sometimes, the disappearance of stocks of weapons and the commercialization/privatization of certain units (presidential guard, protection of persons, private buildings or companies) particularly tarnish their mandate. It is the concept of the Nation-Army that must be understood and applied and that gives the DSF the meaning of preventive defense and human security, which also involves respect for the rights of populations and the legal prosecution of their own abuse. In this context, any civil-military action (infrastructure, health, education, for example) will be felt positively by the population, especially if the DSF involve them in the choice and implementation of their projects. Taking into account the "territorial values" of the populations, as well as the local presence of the DSF is essential, which allows them to respond as closely as possible to local needs.

■ Other debates in this Course: what role for **women** in the PVE? What are the roles for women in society? These two questions being linked, as women are victims and, at the same time, actors of their own destiny, the place of girls and women in their communities, in violent extremist groups, in self-defense groups and in the DSF, was discussed at length. It was recognized that women are a reflection of what is happening in society, in the political, economic and social life of the country. However, too many inequalities denounced, too much marginalization on issues such as the PVE, raise questions as it was unanimously recognized that women are "animators of the society and that their words often have a positive influence on violence". This is how many examples of women's commitment to peace were presented by the participants. Drawing on national or local structures, a number of them are even beginning to enter the field of political dialogue by advocating the acceptance of differences and the search for solutions rather than confrontation. But the Course's gender representation was not proportional, with only one woman designated as a participant. Would security therefore be the sole concern of men?

■ An avalanche of criticism swept through the **media**. They were accused of betting on the sensational and on the attacks (because it sells better), not trying to look into the causes of this violence and the situations in which it took place, and not taking an interest in the culture of peace nor in the promotion of "African" values. On the contrary, the positive role of community radio stations was recognized, whose flexibility allows them to reach all populations, even the most disadvantaged, by giving everyone the opportunity to express

themselves and to exchange views. They were considered particularly effective for PVE, with the added benefit of generally promoting women and young people. The same is true of social media, which are widely used by young people. As for alternative narratives to that of violent extremists, which some believe should be spread by the media, it was recognized that it should only be carried by legitimate people, must come from the experience of the speakers and be adapted to the understanding of the listeners. In addition, the inspiration for the broadcasted programs must come from the populations themselves, from their concerns, and be integrated into the sociology and history of the region covered by the radio.

■ If the **private sector** can and should play an important role in the PVE, it is because it is directly affected by violence. As it has a social responsibility to guarantee jobs and protect its employees, it needs political stability, and must be able to count on a State supplying essential goods to enable it to function. Conversely, in a chaotic environment, this sector can destabilize a community and even a State through its illegal activities, its opaque funds transfers, its hidden exports or its illicit trafficking. Again, each situation is different and precise research should document this sensitive and fragile sector which PVE initiatives should include.

■ Regarding **research**, it was stressed that the PVE, which affects all aspects of the political, economic and social life of society, opens up a vast field to university, government or independent researchers. But how many are they in Central Africa, it was asked? How many think tanks are available for this immense work of collecting and analyzing information, which can help to define local, regional or international policies on violence, its causes and the solutions to be provided? Where are the budgets for this information gathering? Governments, politicians, DSF, local authorities need answers to their questions and proposals must be presented to them.

■ The issue of abandonment that violent extremism **victims** complain about, as well as the conditions under which “**ex-recruits**” could become PVE advocates were strongly raised. The favors (learning, care, food) enjoyed by those who disengage from armed groups, unlike those who have been the victims, can cause significant tensions if national laws are not enacted on this issue, especially when we see that the anti-terrorist laws have a clear priority in budgets, to the detriment of those dedicated to the PVE and to the compensation requested by the victims. It also allowed the participants to question the meaning of community resilience and the lessons that ex-recruits could share on their experiences in terms of violence prevention.

■ The role and legitimacy of **self-defense groups** (in this or various other designations), the building of community responses to extremism, lethal reactions to external attacks in the absence of a State that should ensure order, the privatization of security and the role of the individual in defending a group, were actively discussed in the debates. The feeling of vulnerability that leads to the creation of such groups is certainly ambiguous. In some cases, such as the Kamajors in Liberia and the Teso archers in Uganda, the involvement of these groups has saved entire communities. Elsewhere, brutality, abuses, banditry and refusal to demobilize create new factors of violence. Participants therefore debated in particular the following questions: Are self-defense groups necessary if the State is present? If the latter is absent, should it itself create such groups to support its action? What would then be their mandate? Is this a new social contract, a new role delegated by the State? Some participants stressed that it would be reductive to analyze them on the basis of their negative consequences alone; some governments recognize the social usefulness of the security work carried out by

self-defense groups on behalf of the populations, and the willingness to include some of them in the DSF is a further testimony.

It was noted that the so-called “**non-governed**” areas of the national territory did not exist. There is always someone who rules, as evidenced by the many examples mentioned. In eastern DRC, for example, many popular defense committees have been formed, but they have developed a liking for arms and committed numerous abuses. Elsewhere, local police forces responsible for combating crime were formed. Faced with the “Koulounas” (violent gangs in the city of Kinshasa) or the “*Bébés noirs*” (their alter egos from Brazzaville), the entire population is currently mobilized and multifaceted solutions involving the private sector, NGOs, residents of neighborhoods and authorities at all levels seem able to limit the expansion of these gangs. In the Far North of Cameroon, it was the vigilance committees, according to some participants, that contained the expansion of BH (at the cost of many deaths), through the information they gathered and the operations they carried out, despite numerous mistakes, recognized by the authorities.

IV. Assessment and conclusions

Officially opened by the African Union Special Representative for Counter-terrorism and the Director of the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), by the representative of the Minister of External Relations of Cameroon, and by a representative of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) of Switzerland, this first regional senior Course for PVE in Central Africa was, according to the numerous testimonies gathered from participants, a milestone in the region's efforts to defuse the threat of violent extremism.

Enhanced knowledge of practical and realistic PVE tool marked the Course. It is possible to lead a peaceful and preventive political and social life even in particularly difficult circumstances and surrounded by violence.

The success of this Course confirmed the need to offer this type of capacity building to public actors responsible for developing and implementing PVE policies and programs.

This success was confirmed by both the active, even passionate, interventions of the participants and the insistent request for a timely renewal of such Course for this region.

The essentially military and security audience gathered in Yaoundé underlined the extent to which this region of Central Africa is neglected when it comes to facing the new challenges of violence of mixed origin, both internal and external. Under-observed and off-screened by most international partners (despite situations, certainly diverse, but all extremely worrying), it is at the same time at the crossroads of situations of extreme violence and governmental governance insufficiently equipped to deal with such situations (Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Gabon, DRC, Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe).

If the Cameroon-Chad-CAR zone was at the heart of the work during this Course for the PVE in Central Africa, it clearly appeared that the situation in the DRC and the increasingly active establishment of multiple violent extremist groups are now deeply worrying.

While it was admittedly recognized that women were not sufficiently represented (unfortunately reflecting their very weak presence when it comes to security management)

and that there was insufficient time for discussions, despite spaces planned in the program to promote them, at a future stage, the Course will correct this matter and also strengthen a more political participation while maintaining its high level of participation.

Finally, it was requested that a network be launched between the participants and their institutions for a shared and active implementation of the PVE programs. This request thus echoes the community of practice that is gradually being established through the initiative of the Regional Conversations for the PVE.

Ultimately, if this First Regional Senior Course on PVE in Central Africa may have contributed in the form of awakening on the importance of better integrating the levers of the preventive approach, and was able to bring some basic concepts on this subject to the fifty participants gathered on this occasion in Yaoundé, it also demonstrated that there are still many needs to be met. For their part, those in charge of the Course, the ACSRT of the African Union and the Swiss FDFP, intend to continue their partnership and offer such PVE courses on the African continent.

Some pointers to initiate a PVE action

■ For governments:

- Include in national platforms all State bodies whose action can reduce the factors of VE (ministries of development, culture, social, justice, parliaments, etc.);
- Develop, popularize and implement, through participatory and inclusive processes, a national plan for the prevention of violent extremism;
- Better equip local prevention stakeholders and help structure local platforms or spaces for dialogue;
- Fight against frustrations (marginalization and discrimination, injustice, corruption, violations of human rights and the rule of law, etc.) through responsible public action;
- Strengthen the partnership with the private sector for employment and employee safety;
- Strengthen local communities through supporting local economic activities, youth employment, capacity building of community leaders, etc.

■ For defense and security forces:

- Promote the human security approach by integrating it into defense and security policies and doctrines;
- Strengthen the ties between armies - populations by highlighting the role of the army in the protection of people and property;
- Act with strict respect for human rights, communicate on incidents involving the DSF and enforce the law in cases of violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

■ For researchers:

- Adopt methodologies adapted to the context and unequivocal communication with the interlocutors;
- Provide decision-makers with simple reports explaining violence and guiding solutions, including on human rights, endogenous conflict management practices, the place of women and young people.

■ For women, youth, civil society and the media:

- Commit to respect for children's rights, women's rights and gender equality, and watch for signs of radicalization within families and communities;
- Organize educational discussion sessions led by survivors or those who repented, to prevent others from being seduced by extremist groups;
- Establish dialogue in communities and families in order to encourage social and religious tolerance and to consolidate the living together;
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns using social media, community radios, televisions, based on dialogue and messages of tolerance;
- Get involved and put forward proposals to decision-makers in order to set up appropriate and balanced preventive communication and crisis communication.

■ For regional organizations, the United Nations and international partners:

- Raise awareness, among the States of the region, about the adoption and/or reappropriation of regional and international legal instruments for the prevention and fight against violent extremism;
- Assist in contextually harmonizing prevention and repression strategies;
- Contribute to strengthening the rule of law and institutional order in fragile States;
- Create or strengthen regional or national research structures on VE;
- Consolidate and support national and regional efforts to prevent violent extremism by strengthening capacities regarding respect for human rights and the rule of law, good governance, inclusive dialogue and sustainable development.

Appendix –Useful references

- **Plan of Action of the United Nations Secretary-General to Prevent Violent Extremism (24 December 2015) / Plan d'action du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent (24 décembre 2015)**
English: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674
Français : http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674&referer=/english/&Lang=F
- **OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism / 1999 Convention de l'OUA sur la Prévention et la Lutte contre le Terrorisme**
English: <https://caert.org.dz/official-documents/conventions/convention-terrorism.pdf>
Français : <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/algiers-convention-terrorism-fr.pdf>
- **AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism /2002 UA Plan d'action pour la prévention et la lutte contre le terrorisme**
English: <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-anti-terrorism-plan-of-action.pdf>
Français : https://www.caert.org.dz/fr/AU-official-documents/plan_action_fr.pdf
- **Protocol to the 1999 AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism/ 2004 Protocole à la Convention de l'OUA sur la prévention et la lutte contre le terrorisme**
English: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7787-treaty-0030_-_protocol_to_the_oau_convention_on_the_prevention_and_combating_of_terrorism_e.pdf
Français : <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/protocole-lutte-contre-terrorisme-fr.pdf>
- **African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development/2014 Charte africaine des valeurs et des principes de la décentralisation, de la gouvernance locale et du développement local**
English: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-treaty-0049_-_african_charter_on_the_values_and_principles_of_decentralisation_local_governance_and_local_development_e.pdf
Français : https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-treaty-0049_-_african_charter_on_the_values_and_principles_of_decentralisation_local_governance_and_local_development_f.pdf
- **Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa / 2014 Rapport de la Présidence de la Commission sur le terrorisme et l'extrémisme violent en Afrique**
English: https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-psc-rpt-terrorism-nairobi-2-09-2014-pdf_0.pdf
Français : https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-cps.455.rpt_terrorisme.nairobi.2-09-2014-2-_0.pdf
- **Switzerland's Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism (April 2016) / Plan d'action de politique étrangère pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent du Département fédéral des affaires étrangères (DFAE) de Suisse (avril 2016)**
English: <http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/43587.pdf>
Français: https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/fr/documents/publications/SchweizerischeAussenpolitik/Aussenpolitischer-Aktionsplan-PVE160404_FR.pdf
- **“Regional Conversations for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Sahel-Sahara” /«Conversations régionales pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent au Sahel-Sahara» :**
 - **Dakar, June 2016** : English: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/1609_Investing-in-Peace-

ENGLISH.pdf/Françaishttps://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/1609_ Investing-
in-Peace-FRENCH.pdf

- **N'Djamena, June 2017** : **English**: <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IPI-E-RPT-Chad-Meeting-NoteEnglish.pdf> /Français<https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IPI-E-RPT-Chad-Meeting- NoteFrench.pdf>
- **Algiers, June 2018** : **English**: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1809_Algiers-Meeting-Note-English.pdf /Françaishttps://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1809_Algiers-Meeting-Note-French.pdf/

Note from Co-directors

Any questions about the Course shall be addressed to the co-directors:

- Col. Christian Emmanuel MOUAYA POUYI, Head of Training, ACSRT / AU
(pouyim@africa-union.org)
- Ms Carol MOTTET, Senior Adviser, Human Security Division, FDFA Switzerland
(carol.mottet@eda.admin.ch)

The special contribution of CEIDES (Cameroon) to the work is acknowledged by
The managers of the first regional PVE Course in Central Africa.



African Centre of the Study and Research
on Terrorism (ACSRT)
African Union (AU)

Chahid Boukhazara Abdellah Street

📍 P.O. Box 141 Post Office, Mohammadia, Algiers, Algeria

☎ + 213 21 52 01 10, Fax : +213 21 52 03 78

🌐 www.caert-au.org



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)
Political Directorate (PD)
Human Security Division (HSD)
Bundesgasse 32
3003 Bern
Switzerland
www.eda.admin.ch