



REPORT OF THE

**DELEGATION THAT ATTENDED THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER
TERRORISM HIGH-LEVEL PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON
PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AFRICAN
PARLIAMENTARY UNION (APU) AND THE SHURA COUNCIL OF THE STATE OF
QATAR ON
“UNDERSTANDING THE TERRORIST THREAT IN AFRICA: NEW CHALLENGES
AND NECESSARY MEASURES” HELD AT LA CIGALE HOTEL IN DOHA, THE
STATE OF QATAR FROM 30 TO 31 MARCH 2022.**

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1.0 Introduction

The United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement, in partnership with the African Parliamentary Union (APU) and the Shura Council of the State of Qatar, organized a high level Parliamentary conference to discuss the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism on African states. The theme of the Conference was “Understanding the terrorist threat in Africa: new challenges and necessary measures.” The Conference took place at La Cigale Hotel in Doha, the State of Qatar from 30 to 31 March 2022. Hon. Brig Gen (Rtd) Levi Mayihlome, the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services (DHASS), Hon Tafanana Zhou Member of the African Parliamentary Union (APU) Executive and Mr. Pensel Marunga, Committee Clerk to the Portfolio Committee on Defence, Home Affairs and Security Services, attended the Conference.

The Conference sought to engage members of Parliaments in Africa and the region’s member states in a meaningful discussion on the existing and emerging terrorist threats and the development of adequate measures to address and mitigate terrorism, considering the crucial role of parliaments as the key legislative body with the function of oversight. The importance of engaging parliamentarians in counter-terrorism efforts is well recognised under resolution A/RES/60/288 of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, under which member states resolved to undertake necessary measures to prevent and counter terrorism by strengthening the coordinated efforts and measures of prevention of violent extremism.

2.0 Brief Background to the threat of terrorism.

The threat posed by the rapidly growing presence and activity of terrorist organisations in the continent in the recent years has become one of the most critical international concerns. According to the Terrorist Index, African states such as Nigeria, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Tanzania, Libya and Egypt are among the world’s most affected countries by terrorism. Militant Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Da’esh and Al ’Qaeda, that are particularly active in Syria and Iraq, have been able to extend their influence in several African states where local terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda pledged allegiance to them. The influence of these local affiliates has continued to rise in Africa. In West Africa, particularly the Sahel region, those groups have successfully exploited local grievances and weak governance to command growing numbers of followers and resources, notwithstanding internal divisions and rivalries.

Since 1963, the international community has elaborated nineteen international legal instruments to prevent terrorist acts. The instruments were developed under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and are open to participation by all Member States. The instruments include but are not limited to

instruments regarding civil aviation, nuclear material, maritime navigation, explosive materials, terrorist bombings, financing of terrorism and nuclear terrorism.

3.0 The Aim of the Conference

The major aim of the conference was to discuss the main existing and emerging terrorist threats in the African continent in order to develop a set of measures aimed at mitigating and addressing these threats.

3.1 Expected Outcomes

The high-level parliamentary conference had the following specific outcomes:

- i. Identifying and discussing the main current and emerging terrorist threats in Africa, including the nature, root-causes, key actors, and drivers of these threats;
- ii. Developing and discussing a set of the relevant immediate measures that contribute to mitigation, prevention of these threats;
- iii. Discussing the role of the parliaments in Africa in prevention, mitigation and addressing the existing and emerging terrorist threats;
- iv. Identifying the needs of the parliaments in Africa for technical assistance and capacity building in specific areas of Counter Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism (CT&PVE), including the development or revision of the national CT&PVE strategies and action plans; and
- v. Discussing the need and possibility of establishing a CT&PVE network of African parliamentarians.

4.0 Keynote Speeches

4.1 H.E. Mr. Hassan bin Abdulla Al-Ghanim, Speaker, Shura Council of the State of Qatar

The welcome remarks affirmed the strong support of the State of Qatar to all national and international efforts to combating and eliminating terrorism and preventing the spread of violent extremism, especially the benevolent efforts of the United Nations. The State of Qatar has committed great material and moral support to UNOCT, which is embodied in many memoranda of understanding and agreements concluded between the two parties. The memorandum of understanding signed between UNOCT and the Shura Council, frames the cooperation between the two and approved the opening of the UNOCT Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism in Doha. It was highlighted that UNOCT had so far made great strides in fighting terrorism and prevention of violent extremism through organizing and hosting high level conferences for various parliamentary unions and organizations interested in combating terrorism. The Office would also provide technical support, build the capacity of parliaments, and assist in developing policies and legislation to prevent and address terrorism, as well as working

to increase the participation of women parliamentarians and youth in efforts to prevent, combat and eliminate terrorism and its causes.

4.2 Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT).

In his opening remarks, the Under-Secretary General, highlighted the following:

- That the threat posed by the growing presence and activity of terrorist organizations in parts of Africa in recent years had become one of the most pressing international concerns.
- That the threats from Da'esh, Al-Qaida and their affiliates had increased in terms of frequency and lethality of attacks, especially in the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Mozambique, Somalia, and other parts of Africa.
- That the Conference was key and part of a broader initiative to give new momentum to inter-parliamentary cooperation among national parliaments in Africa and relevant parliamentary assemblies to collectively address the evolving threat of terrorism and violent extremism.
- The Conference demonstrated the importance of African-led and African-owned counter-terrorism efforts that were strengthened by the solidarity among African parliaments and the collective responsibility they hold towards their respective peoples.
- That UNOCT had enhanced the delivery of more impactful, cost-efficient, and sustainable capacity building support through new global programmes on National Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism or Fusion Cells”, Protection of Vulnerable Targets and Youth Engagement and Empowerment.
- That Parliamentarians play an essential role in supporting governments to fulfill international counter-terrorism obligations with respect for the rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism.
- He emphasized that more needs to be done to address the threats plaguing the region, especially with regard to enhancing regional cooperation and sharing of information, expertise, and best practices to prevent and counter terrorism.

4.3 H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ali Houmed, President, Executive Committee, African Parliamentary Union

The narrative alluded to the fact that the scourge of terrorism on the continent was at an unprecedented scale and which, coupled with the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government, calls for a new approach in addressing security on the continent, especially in light of “new destabilizing factors” in Africa. It was reiterated that the spread of Da'esh in Africa has been the most alarming development in 2021, with spillover from Mali into Burkina Faso and Niger, incursions from Nigeria into Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and from Mozambique into Tanzania. The expansion of Da'esh in Central Africa, and especially in northern Mozambique, could have far-reaching implications for peace and

security in the region and needed to be addressed through a coherent, regional approach as a matter of priority. It was forewarned that the situation in the wider region could be aggravated by the relocation of terrorists and other foreign fighters from Libya.

5.0 Session 1: Main current and emerging terrorist threats in the African Continent: Interventions by National Parliaments present

It was highlighted that certain regions in Africa had become serious incubators of transnationally organized crime which quite often was associated with terrorism. Terrorism was no longer faith based as it was perceived in the recent past. In the modern day era, it was seen to be influenced by a plethora of factors which included lack of internal political stability, conflicts over natural resources, climate change, the ravaging effects of COVID 19, smuggling and human trafficking among others. The use of online media for propaganda, recruitment, radicalization and unemployment of the youth, religious intolerance and the continued exclusion and alienation of marginalized groups of society from the mainstream political and economic agenda created conflicts and divisions which led to violent extremism. It was stressed that the major aim of terrorists was to dismantle the African fabric of brotherhood in order to cause total destabilization through the despoliation of natural resources. In addition, it became apparent that some unscrupulous non-state actors and nongovernmental organisations were responsible for financing acts of terror and influenced recruitment of child soldiers in war torn and highly conflicted countries.

Despite being a mammoth task, ending terrorism was achievable through collaborative efforts at local, regional and international level. Emphasis was made on the need for political freedom, respect for human rights, equitable distribution of resources, transparency and accountability and a commitment towards the adoption, ratification and domestication of international and regional legal instruments on counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism. Maintaining peace, justice and harmony among communities in a multiethnic society such as Mauritius was quite complex yet possible through addressing challenges on structural development and using a holistic approach on countering terrorism and preventing extremism. To this end, countries expressed the need for capacitation and training on counter terrorism intelligence and multilateral cooperation and coordination at local level.

Parliamentarians were implored to be proactive in coming up with robust and implementable laws and policies on counter terrorism.

6.0 Common issues that were raised during the plenary sessions

Root causes of terrorism and ways of mitigating terrorist threats and violent extremism were discussed. The following were topical and common throughout the two-day conference:

- Ideological and cultural differences, lack of resources and weak governing systems exposed most African states to threats of terrorism;
- Terrorists use illegal transnational boundaries to finance illicit activities in Africa;
- Poverty and high unemployment rates among the youth are exploited by terrorists in recruiting the youth into their illicit and heinous operations;
- Illicit extraction of and trade in precious minerals is very common in countries where acts of terrorism and violent extremism are high;
- Lack of transparency in the distribution of resources causes serious divisions among citizens which usually culminate in the aggrieved parties resorting to violence in order to settle their scores. In worse scenarios, terrorist groups take advantage of these deep-rooted animosities to finance civil wars and violent mob uprisings against the state;
- Corruption by both state and non-state actors will continue to foment strife and conflicts in a country if it is not addressed, and terror groups take advantage of this challenge to loot public resources;
- Weak criminal justice systems enable terror groups to operate in a country without fear or respect of the law;
- Bandits penetrate state institutions, including state security, using very sophisticated mechanisms that are very difficult to detect and usually do so to destabilize national elections;
- Terrorists have also invaded the cyber space to spread their influence;
- Some non-state actors (civic society organisations) divert from their sanctioned mandates to finance terrorism. They do so by taking advantage of weak governing systems and the prevalence of poverty among African states;
- Regime change agenda has been used to destabilize African governments;
- The media is often times used to propel divisions among citizens and terrorists exploit such civil conflicts to penetrate societies and communities by financing those that fall prey to them.

7.0 Session 2: Measures aimed at mitigating terrorist threats and violent extremism suggested by the participating parliamentarians.

7.1 Transparent and Equitable distribution of resources

It was noted that corruption was an evil that had left many African countries poorer. The economic gap between the rich and the poor has reached alarming levels, thereby causing strife between and among several African communities. It was therefore suggested that legislation that ensured transparency and equitable distribution of resources was essential in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

7.2 Adoption of programs that promote tolerance and respect for human dignity as well as coopting traditional leaders in state institutions;

Governments were encouraged to promote and implement programs that were acceptable and culturally viable for the targeted communities. Development programs which deliberately left out traditional leadership were most likely bound to fail. National governments were advised to engage community leaders who understood the needs of their communities at grassroots level.

7.3 Political and Economic Cooperation at regional level

Regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were vehemently advised to strengthen political cooperation in addition to the existing economic ties. This also included the strengthening of military and security structures at national and regional levels;

7.4 Sharing of information

Increased and strengthened information sharing at national and regional levels for concerted collaborative efforts in curbing terrorism is critical. State institutions should keep up-to-date data and statics regarding the movement of people within and across its borders. Migration management is very essential and information pertaining to the same must be availed to all connected institutions as a counter-terrorist strategy aimed at detecting terrorist threats. Neighbouring countries sharing borders were encouraged to collaborate through sharing vital information on mitigating terrorist threats and violent extremism.

7.4 The Media

Positive reporting void of hate speech is very crucial in the prevention against violent extremism. The Media was seen to be a key player in countering terrorism violent extremism by complementing government efforts of peace building and nation building. Media Houses were encouraged to make a commitment to resort to constructive reporting rather fueling divisions through negative broadcasting.

7.5 Citizen engagement and empowerment

Fighting terrorism and violent extremism should involve all state institutions, private entities and every citizen in the country. The State must come up with programmes that are progressive and people-centred. Citizens must not be divorced from the State. National governments must adopt programs aimed at empowering vulnerable groups of society including the youth, women, people living with disability and minority groups. The total engagement of citizens in developmental projects gives them a sense of ownership and belonging and this is an essential strategy for curtailing violent extremism and terrorism.

7.6 Demobilization of child soldiers, rehabilitation and reintegration into the society.

In countries torn apart by civil wars and mob uprisings, demobilization of child soldiers was said to be very vital. Young children who were forced into joining military groups should be rehabilitated in special institutions that would prepare them for reintegration into society.

7.7 Sport and Sport legends

It was noted that sports can be very instrumental in educating, reconciling and uniting communities in conflict. Well organized sporting events can be effectively utilized in settling scores between or among conflicting and warring parties. More so, sport legends can be very influential in settling differences and educating communities and societies on the need to unite against any terrorist threats.

7.8 Parliaments were encouraged to be more proactive by adopting robust legislation and strengthening oversight of its implementation (legislation aimed at mitigating threats to terrorism). Parliamentarians and State Security should regularly be capacitated in order to keep abreast with evolving terrorist threats.

7.9 Relevant security and law enforcement organs of Member States should engage in a dialogue on the development of effective solutions and robust measures, including the harmonization of national legislation and regulations on PVE and counter-terrorism (CT) in line with the relevant resolutions and recommendations of the UN Security Council and General Assembly as well as the international standards and best practices.

8.0 **Session 3: International technical assistance programmes and projects Counter Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism**

8.1 **Rabat Programme Office**

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism Program Office for Counter-Terrorism and Training in Africa, based in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, was officially inaugurated on June 23, 2021. The Program Office was tasked with developing and implementing key counter-terrorism training programs and initiatives to support requesting Member States and their Security sector and Law Enforcement agencies, with a particular focus on the Sahel and West Africa region.

The Office supports and host already existing and ongoing short-term programs and projects on Counter-Terrorism investigations, border management, prison management, prevention, disengagement and reintegration and countering financing of terrorism that are being carried out by different branches of UNOCT.

8.2 **Border Security and Management**

The global Border and Security Management programme aims to prevent the cross-border movement of terrorists and stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters through improved border

security and management and cross-border cooperation among beneficiary countries. It seeks to increase and strengthen awareness, knowledge and capacity of Member states. Biometric data is shared and used responsibly to enhance border control and security in the counter terrorism context [Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017)].

UNOCT's targeted capacity-building training, based on established best practices for border security management, is being delivered through an “All of UN” approach with key Global Compact partners including IOM and INTERPOL.

8.3 Cyber security and New Technologies

The Programme on Cyber security and New Technologies was adopted in April 2020 with the aim to enhance the capacities of Member States, international and regional organisations and UN entities to raise awareness of the terrorist cyber-threat. It also sought to enhance technical capacities required to prevent, mitigate and respond to terrorist and violent extremist groups misusing new technologies like the internet and Artificial Intelligence. The programme also intends to enhance capacities of Member States to counter and investigate terrorist activities by gathering digital forensic evidence and through the use of new technologies. Ideally, the intention would be that of building a collective understanding on the threat of malicious uses of new technologies by terrorists.

8.4 Countering Terrorist Travel

The Programme assists beneficiary Member States in building their capabilities to detect and counter terrorists and serious criminals. This is done by using Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) to improve the use of international databases with known and suspected terrorists and criminals, such as with INTERPOL, and enhance international information exchange, in accordance with Security Council resolutions and relevant privacy laws. The programme targets The courses on offer are open for registration to all Counter Terrorism Travel Beneficiary Member States, law enforcement agencies, national counter-terrorism agencies, and any official institutions dealing with potential terrorist travel. law enforcement agents

The Secretary-General officially launched the Programme on 7 May 2019. Since then, 47 Member States officially joined the Programme, with approximately 40 more Member States indicating strong interest to do so.

8.5 Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE)

UNOCT's Global Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) Programme was launched in January 2021 and its main objective is to enhance the capacity of Member States, UN entities, regional organization, and civil society in areas such as strategic communications, youth engagement and empowerment, policy assistance, mental health and psychosocial support, gender, and human rights. Member states would benefit from capacity-building initiatives designed using a human rights, evidence based, co-design approach, which is specially tailored to the needs and existing capacities of beneficiaries, within the local context in which they operate.

8.6 Fusion Cells

The Global Fusion Cells Programme is funded by the United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (China). The programme is being implemented by UNOCT in cooperation with Interpol and various other organisations. The focuses on strengthening existing national counter-terrorism structures (Fusion Cells or Centres) that engage in collecting, all – source, all – threat, reporting and provide support through specialist technical assistance. It also seeks to improve Member States' production of strategic and operational level outputs, such as the strategic threat assessments, and where possible, support Member States' capacity to develop and maintain “terrorist watch lists”. The current programme beneficiaries include Ghana, Botswana, Uganda, Togo, and the regional body SADC.

9.0 Session 4: Needs of Parliaments in Africa for technical assistance and capacity building

It was noted that African Parliaments required technical assistance and capacity building in specific areas of counterterrorism and prevention of violent extremism. A call was made to establish an effective and dedicated counterterrorism and prevention of violent extremism network of African Parliamentarians. This would provide a conducive platform for Parliamentarians to share experiences and information on counterterrorism and extremism.

10 Key outcomes and Resolutions

- Establishment of an online network for Parliamentarians from African States on Counter Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism- This will facilitate continual engagements of Parliament through direct sharing of information and experiences relating to mitigating threats to terrorism.
- Establishment of a working group on Africa to design concrete plans of actions for future engagements;
- Setting up parliamentary advocates on Counter-Terrorism and Prevention of Violent Extremism at national level to sensitize the population;
- Where necessary, review of legislation on Counter Terrorism at national level;
- Supporting sporting engagements and Youth Education programmes;

- Consolidating and expanding technical assistance and capacity building programmes to member states in thematic areas such as Border Security and Management, Counter Terrorism Investigations, Prison Management, Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) and Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (PRR).

10.0 Observations

- 10.1** Noting that Zimbabwe is currently not directly and overtly experiencing terrorist threats in particular, it is worth knowing that terrorism is increasingly becoming ubiquitous. The Cabo Delgado case is an eye opener and should serve as a lesson that terrorism knows no boundaries and the threat posed by the same is imminent hence the call for a proactive as opposed to a reactive approach to terrorism.
- 10.2** Political instability, corruption, unfair distribution of resources, weak conflict and resolution strategies and polices, lawlessness, weak justice delivery system, poverty, gender imbalances, unemployment of the youth and exclusion of minority groups from national development programs are among the common sources of extremism and drivers of terrorism
- 10.3** Fighting terrorism calls for strong bilateral and regional collaboration and international cooperation. Information intelligence is critical and countries which share borders are encouraged to share vital information that is critical in countering terrorism.
- 10.4** The porosity of the border remains a cause for concern. It is reported that there are more than thirty-three undesignated crossing points countrywide. Thus, the unregulated cross border movement of people through undesignated crossing points is a threat to the internal security of a country.
- 10.5** The State, media and civil society organisations must operate in a harmonious environment where the media and civil society organisations should be independent in their operations yet positively complementing government efforts of nation building and development as opposed to fueling divisions and conflicts at all levels.
- 10.6** There is need to capacitate academic and security sector research institutions in order to enhance the State's preparedness to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism.
- 10.7** The State must also take advantage of UNOCT programmes aimed at capacitating State Security agencies as well as Parliamentarians on their legislative and oversight function.

11.0 Recommendations

- 11.1** Starting with the 2023 national budget going forward, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should increase its budgetary allocations on all programs and

projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of the State in preventing social unrest which has the potential of fueling violent extremism and threats of terrorism;

- 11.2 The State must take stern measures to arrest corruption, address gender imbalances, ensure transparent and equitable distribution of resources, implement conflict and resolution strategies and polices and strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary system in order to guard against violent extremism and terrorism;
- 11.3 Bilateral agreements on integrated border management and sharing of immigration data with neighbouring countries must be prioritised to cope with ever-changing trends in technology which have a large bearing on terrorism;
- 11.4 By the end of 2023, the Government must ensure that all designated ports of entry and exit are upgraded with enhanced physical and electronic security systems while increased physical patrols supported by adequate tools of trade must be prioritised in order to curb illegal crossing along the borderline;
- 11.5 By end of July 2023, local media practitioners should be sensitized and capacitated on positive and constructive journalism that resonates well with national ethos, interests and aspirations;
- 11.6 The government must invest in capacitating and strengthening academic and security sector research institutions with a view to increasing knowledge on drivers of violent extremism and terrorism and possible ways of curbing these ills of society that threaten the security of the nation.

12.0 Conclusion

The pervasive nature of violent extremism and the threat of terrorism are inevitable. No single country is purely safe from the scourge of terrorism. Political instability, weak judicial systems, economic collapse and social decay, cyber bullying, corruption, transnational crimes, severely porous borders, increased human trafficking, increased irregular migration, soaring unemployment rates, exclusion and alienation of minority groups and the marginalized groups of society, hunger and the perils of natural disasters due to climate change, pandemics, religious intolerance and ethnic conflicts among others are all drivers of extremism and terrorism, individually or collectively. Indeed, Africa is under siege! A whole-of-government or whole-of-society approach is very critical in addressing violent extremism and terrorism. Regional cooperation and integration in countering terrorism is the way to go. Preparedness is significant. Zimbabwe needs to stay awake and be on the guard.