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Summary report

National Senior Course for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) - Togo

Lomé, Togo, 11-14 July 2022

Note from the course directors

The course directors would like to thank all participants and resource persons for their invaluable contributions to this interactive course. However, they take full responsibility for any shortcomings and for transcribing the work in this report.

Any questions on the course should be addressed to the co-directors:

- Col. Christian Emmanuel MOUAYA POUYI, Head of Training, ACSRT/AU (pouyim@africa-union.org / mouayapouyi2003@yahoo.fr)
- Mrs Carol MOTTET, Senior Adviser, Peace and Human Rights Division, Swiss FDFA (carol.mottet@eda.admin.ch)

I. Introduction

In 2019, the African Union's African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), based in Algiers, and the Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) launched a Joint **Training Programme for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE)** for African Union Member States. It was set up in response to requests from governments and seeks to highlight the importance of preventing violence in order to reduce its consequences and prevent it from escalating. It aims to explore the multiple causes of violent extremism (VE), highlight ways to reduce them, and enable participating public, private, and civil society leaders to build their capacity to effectively incorporate the PVE approach into their respective activities and responsibilities.

The programme consists of PVE regional and national courses. There have already been three regional courses: two for Central African countries (Yaoundé, 2019[1] and Libreville, 2022[2]) and one for West African countries (Accra, 2022[3]). **At the behest of the Togolese authorities, a PVE national course was organized in Lomé from 11 to 14 July 2022**. It was organized immediately after the regional course in Accra. The course therefore broadly took up the form and content of the Accra regional course, while tailoring the content to the needs of the Togolese authorities and the national and regional realities prevailing in mid-July 2022. The warm welcome that the organizers and resource persons from the region received in Lomé from both the Togolese authorities and national representatives contributed immensely to the success of this four-day meeting. They were sincerely appreciated in return.

At the time this course was launched in Lomé, the country had just witnessed several incidents that led to the loss of human lives in the previous months in the same region. This shows that VE has spread to countries south of Burkina Faso, including Togo, Benin, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Would we see the same surge in violence in the coastal countries that Burkina experienced on the border with Mali? **Would the surprise caused by this upsurge in violence, a surprise that was similar to that experienced by the Burkina Faso authorities and population, who had long remained in denial, raise awareness on the importance of the PVE as a violence curbing instrument?** These were the questions that course participants analysed and deliberated upon. They helped to strengthen the awareness of authorities at the meeting that in order for peace to reign, an approach complementary to the strictly military and security approach was necessary. The more the weeks and months go by, the more obvious are the advances made by armed groups. The situation in Burkina Faso, which was thoroughly analysed by different course modules, vividly illustrated the threats and risks currently faced by states. Most participants were not fully aware of the seriousness of this evolving threat.

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[1] Rapport du Cours Afrique centrale de 2019 (Yaoundé) : https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39274-doc-rapport_synthese_fr.pdf ; Report of the 2019 Central Africa Course (Yaounde): https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39274-doc-summary_report_1.pdf

[2] Rapport du Cours Afrique centrale de 2022 (Libreville) : https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42136-doc-Cours_regional_PEV_CEEAC_28-31.03.2022_Rapport_synthese_v.2022_04_25_FINAL_F.pdf ; Report of the 2022 Central Africa Course (Libreville): https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42136-doc-Cours_regional_PEV_CEEAC_28-31.03.2022_Rapport_synthese_v.2022_04_25_FINAL_E-1.pdf

[3] Rapport du Cours Afrique de l'Ouest de 2022 (Accra) : https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42278-doc-Cours_regional_PEV_AO_Accra_4-7.07.2022_Rapport_synthese_v.2022_10_04_F_1.pdf; Report of the 2022 West Africa Course (Accra): https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42278-doc-Cours_regional_PEV_AO_Accra_4-7.07.2022_Rapport_synthese_v.2022_10_04_E_1.pdf

Since Togo has long been immune to such violence, **this programme is designed to integrate traditional security responses into a comprehensive approach that puts people at the centre of state concerns in all areas under the state's responsibility, whether security, political or social. This participation is based on dialogue, at all levels of public governance**, be it local, regional or national. To this end, the PVE holds that all the components of society must be involved in the decisions that concern them, because the future of everyone is at stake. Extreme violence, which can vary enormously from one place or country to another, is a phenomenon that affects all of society. It is therefore society as a whole that must decide on the best ways to put an end to it and, at the same time, adopt the most appropriate ways to prevent it.

II. Course scope, methodology and resources

This programme organized **the National PVE Course for senior Togolese officials** from 11 to 14 July 2022 in Lome.

The course was opened by Lieutenant Colonel Messan Akobi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection of Togo and President of the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Prevention and Fight against Violent Extremism (CIPLEV). While highlighting the grave situation in the North of the country, which justified the establishment of an "emergency plan" in the Savannah region, he described the activities of the CIPLEV, which, since 2019, "has been giving the communes the tools they need at all levels" to prevent violence. This was a good introduction to the future deliberations of the participants, many of whom came from the decentralized structures of the CIPLEV. A total of 48 Togolese representatives from the administration, the DSF, parliament, political parties and civil society attended the course. In addition to these nationals, there were a dozen personalities from the West and Central African regions who were willing to contribute their skills as resource persons to facilitate these four days of intense work and meetings.

Like the other courses mentioned above, the PVE course in Togo consisted of **20 modules**. These allowed participants to experience, through discussions and practical exercises, the full scope, complexity and importance of the prevention approach. As with the other courses in the programme, these modules were divided into three main chapters: knowledge of **VE drivers, PVE strength and tools, and the roles that each stakeholder in society** is called upon to play in their area.

In order to avoid repetition, this report does not revisit in detail the scope (concept, issues, and objectives), methodology, resources, and organizers of the joint African Union-Swiss training programme under which this Togo national course took place, as these have been fully presented in the 2019, 2021, and 2022 reports of already completed regional courses. They are available in French and English on the AU website (see links above). The organizers would like to refer readers to these reports for a comprehensive presentation of the course programme and the importance and usefulness of PVE for the future of states.

III. PVE Course outcomes

III. 1 The importance of understanding the causes of PVE

Like countries in the Sahel, coastal countries in the Gulf of Guinea are feeling the threat of VE. Social and political equilibrium is being undermined by their attacks and everyone is wondering

where the southern expansion of the areas under the control of these groups will stop. **These concerns explain the need, recognized by all, to better understand the root causes of this violence**. While Togo has so far been little affected by VE, this phenomenon is of great concern because no one knows where it will end. This explains why an important part of the course was devoted to the causes of VE. In order to better understand and actively implement PVE, it was necessary to understand what was happening here and elsewhere in the region.

Burkina Faso, long considered to be a state immune to this violence, and half of whose territory is currently occupied by VE movements, was a case in point. It was analysed and discussed thoroughly throughout the course, because what is happening there is still not well understood in Togo. **The media only shows raw images of the violence without providing any background**. It was therefore crucial for participants to **understand** the mechanisms behind the expansion of areas controlled by armed groups, the language used to lure populations away from traditional administrative and state systems, recruitment techniques, and the geographic, political and financial strategies of the two major jihadist movements that occupy the Sahel. In a nutshell, how the violent extremists have succeeded in winning over the hearts and minds of the population.

Moreover, the complexity of the reasons accounting for such a spectacular rise in VE warranted the course to revisit it many times. In addition to this question, the course asked **why the PVE, using the example of prevention in the area of health, has not been mainstreamed into public policies**. Were the populations and the authorities concerned by these threats? Do they really think that only exogenous factors, outside the country, are responsible for VE attacks? Who are their local accomplices? **What sensitivities should the government pay attention to? How can the population be encouraged to take responsibility for their own security, alongside the State?** These are the numerous questions which participants tried to answer in this first part of the course

The course was marked by intense discussions on the **political causes of VE**. The example of Burkina Faso and other countries in crisis was not enough to expose the flaws in government management of political, economic and community power, in the management of minorities and in the equitable distribution of resources among central, regional and local authorities. It was demonstrated that the credibility of political and power bodies, which was already faltering before the advent of VE, tends to crumble under the blows of the latter. It was acknowledged that the situation in Togo could be similar to that of Burkina Faso, because **the country also has a problem of social cohesion**. Furthermore, the proliferation of militias and self-defence groups, with all the attendant problems, could, if care is not taken, also develop in Togo. In addition to this restructuring of the balance of power within states affected by VE, there is a concurrent collapse of the **judicial system**, which is nothing new. For example, the judiciary is incapable of establishing solid safeguards against the widespread impunity and corruption that is rife in many states. There was a lot of discussion on this topic because participants were well aware that these social problems, while not new, are common to many countries in the region and are at the root causes of the frustrations that fuel armed groups

Politicians, be they nationally, regionally or locally elected officials as well as political party activists, are often blamed for the deterioration of the country's security and social situation. This idea was shared during the course. However, a reflection on **citizenship and life in society** toned down this view. It was clearly shown that everyone, in their own way, is involved in politics. **Politics means participating in the life of the community**. Everyone has their own plans for society, regardless of whether they are politically active or not. VE is only an

extraordinary phase of this life in society, a radical challenge to the established order. It is an unusual destabilization, among others, of social balances. In this regard, the following questions were asked: what kind of civic-mindedness have we developed around us? Where have we put the respect of others in our social and political life? What kind of governance have we accepted or, more actively, put in place? Are we not the real political actors? **Have we made dialogue the foundation of our social life?** The crisis that Africa is facing requires a much greater individual and collective commitment than is apparent. **"The collapse and possible demise of the state is the responsibility of each and every one of us,"** it was repeated. A failed state is one that no longer addresses the concerns of its population. Therefore, everyone is called upon to make an individual and collective commitment.

After the political causes of VE, the course then proceeded to explore its **economic causes**. A long list of objective reasons was presented, ranging from poverty to corruption, from unemployment to the centralization of economic activities in the capitals and the frustrations this brings about. Urgent and profound measures are necessary because frustrations and anger are constantly rising. This anger only develops when people are convinced that they deserve better, especially as regards employment. This is especially true for rural populations. Africa's raw materials are sought after by the whole world. Their existence has contributed to the development of VE that capitalize on the tensions caused by unfair and non-inclusive land policies. Trafficking in these resources and poaching have increased with the presence of VE, but this has also been of benefit to the populations. Gold is at the very heart of VE expansionist policies. State and multinational land policies that do not respect the rights of local populations, and fiscal policies that penalize small communities, obviously encourage VE expansion.

When analysing the **social factors** enabling VE expansion, a series of reasons were put forward. Intergenerational conflicts, new technologies (social networks and globalization), the huge importance of money in our societies featured prominently. It was pointed out that **young people make up a large segment of the population** and it was surprising that they had not taken their destiny into their own hands more actively. On the contrary, it seems as if the confrontation between young people and their elders is not going to subside. We can therefore expect even greater social upheaval in the future.

Regarding these **young people**, it was said that the problems they encounter (social and political marginalization, lack of training, unemployment, poverty) cause them to lose their bearings in the face of glaring inequalities and the belief that they are excluded from political and administrative governance. In these circumstances, the advocacy of violence, on the net for example, as a means of self-affirmation and social positioning, as well as the prospect of financial and family advantages, swayed many young people to join VE groups. Witchcraft, which is very common in some circles, and religious ideology also account for this attraction to violence. **Understanding the motives for joining VE groups** means understanding how to re-engage with these young people, allowing them to consider a possible return and, why not, mobilize them in PVE efforts.

One of the main sources of frustration and anger that often lead to the involvement of young people in VE groups is **the use of the DSF in difficult moments in the life of the state**. Military and police operations are, in fact, too often repressive and little respectful of the rights and needs of the population. A fundamentally new approach to training soldiers and police officers should be adopted, one that promotes the organization of defence and security forces based on support to the population and not on their exploitation.

To conclude this part of the course, it was recalled that if the causes of VE are beginning to be better perceived, if discussions such as those that took place during the course are possible, it is primarily because many **researchers and academics** have studied the **sociology of violence**, the political underpinnings of VE, and the hidden aspects of the systems of economic and political domination that persist in societies where democratic debate is limited, where anathema is quick to be pronounced, and where checks and balances on power are lacking. **Research is therefore indispensable**. However, the funds earmarked for it, particularly in the social sciences, are becoming increasingly scarce. It is important to advocate for this cause because research provides a better understanding of how armed groups (but also various other actors of violence) insert themselves into and use latent or poorly resolved conflicts, how their strike force is used by different political, economic or ideological structures or how these groups use the weakness of security mechanisms and the porosity of borders in their movements, and finally how they challenge the rule of law, the political structure, the social balance, the ancestral traditions and habits and, in short, the existence and purpose of our states. Research thus teaches us that the causes of VE can be both endogenous and exogenous.

III. 2 The need for PVE and its implementation

To address the rise of extreme violence and political and social disorders that may still occur, **the importance of dialogue as an essential element of prevention** was underscored by both the resource persons and all participants. How can peace be built without dialogue? It is absolutely necessary to adhere to the principle. Grassroots communities know how to curb violence. Why not us? Yes, dialogue is possible as long as the actors know each other. There must be a desire to meet. The meeting is a step towards dialogue. We must convince each other that violence is useless. It is necessary to rise above antagonisms. **A State cannot be built against society**. It is always possible to dialogue with the adversary, but the dialogue must be with the grassroots communities. With Violent Extremists? Yes, but a fair language is needed, a language that will be respected by the Violent Extremists, if they trust their interlocutors. You have to be resolute and listen to the fighters. If there are people who oppose it, it is important to find a way to deal with the conflicts. Every society needs it.

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006) and the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2016) are the international benchmarks of the prevention approach. It is these texts and their recommendations that have served as the backbone of all national and regional PVE strategies that have since been approved by States. However, while these strategies do exist on paper, this PVE governance does not seem to have been genuinely integrated, seven years on, into public policies and leaders' narratives. Yet VE has not dissipated since then. Far from it, violence is currently spreading far beyond the scope of VE. It is, indeed, a contagious expansion of violence that is currently being observed, and the populations are the first victims.

The course participants therefore examined **the role and responsibilities of everyone** in the implementation of effective PVE policies. Working from the principle that the populations are the primary beneficiaries, they reviewed the different stakeholders who are the most likely to facilitate this understanding of security shared by all, which is also referred to as **human security**. This is because it is a question of "our life", of life in society, and of peace, which is built every day. **PVE is a process**. It is not made up of concepts or distant objectives: it is about everyone understanding how to act here and now.

III. 3 The role of some stakeholders of the society in PVE

As essential PVE stakeholders, **communities** are at the forefront of prevention, because it is this living together that creates the **State**. With this observation, the responsibility is clearly established: "**we are part of our community**, just like the customary and religious leaders, the locally and nationally elected officials, the economic actors who enable us to live, and the women, young people and men we live with". Surviving violence is a common everyday approach: the feeling of belonging to a protective social group is an essential reassurance. The number of people joining armed groups is an indicator of the strength or absence of this feeling, a gauge of **the value of the social contract that binds the individual to his community and the community to the State**. This is why it is so important for the state's public services to invest massively and at all levels in the life of communities and to promote the spirit and policies of **decentralization** at the national level

The **woman** is at the centre of the community and **plays the leading role**. Regardless of her status, her environment, her functions, she is a determining factor in the choice that men make in their lives. They are "influencers" to use a fashionable term. However, their dignity is too often scorned, which is why they sometimes behave in unexpected ways, such as supporting rebels or even participating in rebellions. Nevertheless, it is with them that dialogue is possible, especially when it comes to dealing with VE. It is therefore necessary to understand what they are experiencing and what they have to say. They know, they have an intuition of what is possible. It is essential to listen to them, especially rural women who are too often neglected. They are all too often excluded from the decisions that affect them directly. But recognition of their pivotal role will give fresh impetus to the PVE: they are the strength and the future of a nation at peace.

The **Defence and Security Forces (DSF)** embody the State in its most concrete prerogatives. They are the bedrock of protecting the population. Their duty is to share the security concerns of society with the population. However, this is very often not the case. Sometimes the presence and actions of the DSF, through their abuses and extortion, push young people to join violent armed groups. The presence of the DSF must therefore, according to the participants, be transformed into a far-reaching cooperation with all the actors concerned. Dialogue with local leaders, PVE training for field officers, and media support are all necessities that must be integrated into DSF operations. It was highlighted that the DSF who are open to dialogue, communicate intelligently about their activities and presence, and act with respect for the population, greatly reduce the risks they themselves run, while helping to appease young people at risk of joining extremist groups. CIPLEV in Togo understands this very well. This pioneering structure in the region has made **dialogue between civilians, administrative officials and the DSF** the core of its mission. Although it is distributed across the country, it is still under-resourced. It is hoped that the National PVE Strategy which was recently endorsed by the government and is awaiting adoption by the National Assembly will give it a new impetus.

One might have expected that **cooperation between states** in the face of the rise of VE would develop rapidly and effectively. However, these States are encountering many challenges in coordinating their security policies and responses. The Accra initiative, which responds to obvious needs, nevertheless shows the obstacles that States with such different linguistic, political, social and security cultures encounter in their understanding and coordination of each other. In addition, there is a lack of practice in providing assistance to other states when they are in danger. The issue of a joint regional force in the Gulf of Guinea was also discussed. Discussions on this topic revealed that states are not yet ready to pool their forces into a regional

entity. They also underlined the reluctance of governments in the region to depend, both multilaterally and bilaterally, on external funding which, all too often, does not take local realities and sensitivities into consideration.

Regarding the role of the **stakeholders in the justice system**, it was emphasized that PVE depends on the vision that people have of their own behaviour. Laxity as well as extreme strictness were immediately criticized. Impunity, political or financial dependence or corruption are flaws that impair the wisdom of judgments. However, the role that the judicial stakeholders play in the crises that they are called upon to resolve is fundamental. The serenity of young people and the reduction of tensions in the communities depend on them.

As for **young people**, if they are at the forefront of armed groups and militias, it is because they have called into question their sense of belonging to their community and their nation. At the same time, there are many who have committed themselves to society through cultural, social, civic, economic or political actions. They are key PVE stakeholders. If they are demanding their place in the decision-making bodies, it is because they are aware that their future is at stake. Turning a deaf ear and failing to actively integrate them into the decisions that concern them, even if it means disrupting certain habits, is a risk whose consequences are clearly visible to us.

The role of **the media** in PVE was considered essential by the participants. While their importance was fully recognized, the diversity of their behaviour was also noted. Who should they serve? The state or the population? Should we maintain the surveillance systems that continuously report on press offenses to the point that newspapers are constantly censoring themselves? Why control only the press and not social networks? Without adequate training, and ethical safeguards, the media cannot render the services expected of them to democracy. Which surveillance would be the most adequate? What images can be transmitted? And how do we balance reporting, information and national security? One thing is certain: the media play a fundamental role in advocating the importance of women's role in society. It is for women, especially in the countryside, that community radio stations were developed. It is through them that women have been able to express themselves freely. Through these instruments, women have become the main PVE players.

III. 4 Education and culture, PVE drivers

Education plays a vital role in crystallizing ideas, establishing peace of mind and socializing people. However, formal education systems everywhere lack the funds to support them. It is also very unequal and reaches only a limited number of children in many countries in the region. To offset these shortcomings, **the role of the family**, as the central focus of education, is therefore crucial. This role must be revalued. **The teaching of the values of peace and prevention of violence, as well as that of dialogue and respect for others, pertains to both the family and the school system**. These are values that are directly associated with the PVE.

Finally, the course addressed the cultural barriers to PVE as well as the elements of **culture** that can foster it. Community resilience is not something that is declared, but is rather experienced and created on a daily basis. While behaviours that are deeply rooted in people's cultural responses cannot be deconstructed, they can evolve in response to the realities of events. Traditions must be passed on to young people first and foremost, while accepting the existence of new technologies and an openness to the world that disrupts generational relations. Here again, dialogue, family and intergenerational dialogue, is the way to circumvent the logic

of silence too often adopted out of habit. In any case, the most important thing is to maintain social cohesion. This takes precedence over the application of authoritarian behaviours, whether they are imported or traditional. Moreover, engaging young people in cultural projects is for them often synonymous with dignity, creativity, sharing and a sense of service, where they find a meaning that is often lacking in their lives.

IV. Conclusion

This National Course on the PVE in Togo, the first for an African Union Member State, was another success for the joint ACSRT and Swiss FDFA programme. The welcome, liveliness and cheerfulness of the hosts did not let up at any time. They contributed greatly to the success of the course. Although it was very intensive, the course was followed with consistent interest. The format of the presentations, dialogues and discussions that interspersed the course confirmed the need for information and training that was at the origin of the programme. Each participant went home with the PVE package of their choice. Feedback from participants was unanimous: the community of people who have become aware of the importance of PVE and its incorporation into public, professional and personal policies has grown The dialogue will continue: it is the glue that binds this community of thought and practice.
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Annex 1 – Useful references

- **Plan d'action du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent (24 décembre 2015) / Plan of Action of the United Nations Secretary-General to Prevent Violent Extremism (24 December 2015)**
  Français :
  http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674&referer=/english/&Lang=F
  English: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674

- **1999 Convention de l'OUA sur la Prévention et la Lutte contre le Terrorisme / OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism /**
  Français : http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/algiers-convention-terrorism-fr.pdf
  English: https://caert.org.dz/official-documents/conventions/convention-terrorism.pdf

- **2002 UA Plan d'action pour la prévention et la lutte contre le terrorisme / AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism**
  Français : https://www.caert.org.dz/fr/AU-official-documents/plan_action_fr.pdf
  English: http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-anti-terrorism-plan-of-action.pdf

- **2004 Protocole à la Convention de l'OUA sur la prévention et la lutte contre le terrorisme / Protocol to the 1999 AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism**
  Français : http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/protocole-lutte-contre-terrorisme-fr.pdf
  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

- **2014 Charte africaine des valeurs et des principes de la décentralisation, de la gouvernance locale et du développement local / African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development**
  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
  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

- **2014 Rapport de la Présidence de la Commission sur le terrorisme et l'extrémisme violent en Afrique / Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa**
  Français : https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-cps.455.rpt_.terrorisme.nairobi.2-09-
  2014-2-_0.pdf
  English: https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-psc-rpt-terrorism-nairobi-2-09-2014-
  pdf_0.pdf

- **Plan d'action de politique étrangère pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent du Département fédéral des affaires étrangères (DFAE) de Suisse (avril 2016) / Switzerland's Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism (April 2016)**
  Français   :
  https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/fr/documents/publications/SchweizerischeAussenpolitik/Auss
  enpolitischer-Aktionsplan-PVE160404_FR.pdf
  English: http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/43587.pdf

Annex 2 : A word about the partners

The African Union, its reference framework and the ACSRT

The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was set up, as a structure of the African Union Commission, in accordance with the provisions set out in section H, paragraphs 19 to 21 of the AU Plan of Action for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa (2002). Upon its establishment, the objectives were to assist African countries in building and strengthening their capacity to prevent and combat terrorism, to act as a watchdog and warning tool, and to complement international action by strengthening cooperation among African countries in these areas. Subsequent decisions by AU political bodies expanded this mandate to include the prevention and fight against violent extremism.

The AU Commission, through the ACSRT, strives to:

- build the capacity of States to prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism, (strategies and Plans of Action, training, advice...);
- promote better institutional interaction and coordination at the national and regional levels and better development of the Early Warning Mechanism;
- work towards improving the political and legal framework for the prevention and fight against terrorism and violent extremism;
- conduct and promote research on terrorism and violent extremism issues.

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, this course is consistent with the mandate of the ACSRT.

The Swiss FDFA's PVE programme

Following the adoption of the United Nations Plan of Action for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (2016), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) made this topic a priority (*). The Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) is the FDFA's centre of competence that implements its priorities in the areas of peace and human security.

It launched a PVE programme as early as 2016, which has since undertaken a range of advocacy, dialogue and training activities in support of this prevention approach that focuses on the causes of violence and the alternatives that can be provided. It also mobilizes its experts to carry out activities with its partners in the field.

This initiative has held some fourty meetings, which have brought together some 2000 people from various professional backgrounds in North, West and Central Africa.

The objective is to provide an informal platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue on the prevention approach, to highlight and strengthen positive initiatives that offer concrete alternatives to VE, and to help build the capacities of PVE stakeholders in their jobs and in their communities.

The African Union's ACSRT is a partner in the initiative and has partnered with the Swiss FDFA to launch this joint PVE training programme.

(* The Swiss FDFA adopted a Foreign Policy Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in April 2016 - see http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/43587.pdf)