

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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African Union Special Envoy on Youth Highlights the Importance of Youth Engagement at the Third United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism

New York, 19 June 2023 - The African Union Special Envoy on Youth, Ms. Chido Mpemba, delivered a powerful speech at the Third United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism. The conference focused on addressing terrorism through multilateral cooperation and brought together heads of state, UN agencies, ministers, civil society organizations, and youth representatives from around the world.

In her address titled "Voices of Youth and Civil Society," Ms. Mpemba emphasized the urgent need for enhanced cooperation and multilateralism in countering terrorism. She highlighted that terrorist acts do not wait for conferences, as they claim young lives and jeopardize the future of nations. Ms. Mpemba stressed the interconnectedness of peace, security, and development, emphasizing that addressing terrorism alone is insufficient and that creating peaceful environments and ensuring sustainable development worldwide are crucial.

Youth, particularly those in marginalized communities, bear a disproportionate burden as victims and potential perpetrators of terrorist attacks. Factors such as poverty, unemployment, and poor governance contribute to their vulnerability. Ms. Mpemba underscored the importance of involving young people in preventive measures and their critical roles in achieving continental and global development goals, such as the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During her speech, Ms. Mpemba drew attention to alarming statistics, revealing that Africa accounted for approximately 50% of all deaths attributed to terrorism globally in 2021. Regions such as the Sahel, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Mozambique, and Eastern Africa have been significantly affected. She urged the audience to engage and prioritize young people in counter-terrorism efforts, emphasizing the significance of building trust, ensuring peaceful communities, and addressing the socio-economic development of youth.

Ms. Mpemba acknowledged the ongoing efforts of various organizations and initiatives, such as the United Nations-African Union Working Group Meetings on Countering

Terrorism and the Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government. She stressed the need for sustained funding for African-led initiatives, youth-centered peace and security strategies, support for grassroots organizations, and partnerships with youth initiatives.

The African Union Youth Envoy's office has been actively advocating for the implementation of the Youth Charter, which aims to promote a culture of peace and tolerance among young people. Ms. Mpemba called for policies and programs that fully reflect the views of young people, opening channels for cooperation with youth on key counter-terrorism priorities. She highlighted the potential of young people's technological expertise and innovation in countering terrorism.

In conclusion, Ms. Mpemba emphasized the need for a preventive, holistic, and inclusive approach to counter-terrorism, sustainable funding for African initiatives, and the establishment of a fund or resource stream to strengthen local sustainable development initiatives. She stressed the importance of collaboration between international and regional bodies, calling for reliable and adequate funding for joint approaches.

As the world prepares for the Africa Counter-Terrorism Summit scheduled to be held in Nigeria later this year or in early 2024, Ms. Mpemba reminded everyone that countering terrorism is a shared responsibility. She called for unity, development, and stability, emphasizing the need for resources, coordination, and active inclusion of young people, women, and girls in preventive approaches.

For more information Contact

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