



**EXPERTS MEETING ON THE ELABORATION OF OPERATIONAL DOCUMENTS FOR THE
MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE (MNJTF) OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE LAKE CHAD
BASIN COMMISSION AND BENIN AGAINST THE BOKO HARAM TERRORIST GROUP**

YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON: 5-7 FEBRUARY 2015



FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

1. Experts of the four Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission – LCBC (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria) and Benin gathered at the *Palais des Congrès* of Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 5 to 7 February 2015, to finalise the operational documents of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram. They were assisted in this by experts of the African Union (AU) Commission. Experts and officials from other African regional organisations and bilateral and multilateral partners, particularly from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), also took part in the meeting.

2. The meeting was opened by His Excellency Mr Edgard Alain Mebe Ngo'o, Minister Delegate at the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon in charge of Defence. The opening session was also marked by speeches made by the representatives of the LCBC and the AU Commission. The speakers recalled the objectives of the meeting and the nature of the menace that should be confronted. They congratulated the Heads of States of the LCBC countries and Benin for their timely reaction to the threat of Boko Haram, and thanked the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, and the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU for having put the question of the fight against Boko Haram at the top of the agenda of the 24th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the AU, held in Addis Ababa, on 30 and 31 January 2015. They reiterated their dismay at the despicable atrocities committed by Boko Haram and expressed their profound gratitude to all the forces already engaged in operations against the terrorist group.

3. Referring to the communiqué of the 484th meeting of the PSC held in Addis Ababa, at the level of Heads of State and Government, on 29 January 2015, which authorised the deployment of the MNJTF; the conclusions of the 5th meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence the LCBC Member States held in Niamey, Niger, on 20 January 2015; and the final communiqué of the extraordinary summit of the countries of LCBC held on 7 October 2014, as well as to other relevant decisions of the AU and the LCBC, the experts undertook an in-depth analysis of the nature and evolution of Boko Haram, the regional expanses of its activities in the Lack Chad Basin region, the logistical and operational capabilities of the group, and the impact of its atrocities on civilian populations, as well as on the social and economic infrastructures of the regions where it operates.

4. The experts finalised the draft concept of operation (CONOPS), defining the strategic coordination, elements of mission support and the rules of engagement that shall prevail in the conduit of military operations. In this regard, they recalled the mandate of the Force as follows:

- (i) create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, in order to significantly reduce violence against civilians and other abuses, including sexual- and gender-based violence, in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP);

- (ii) facilitate the implementation of overall stabilization programmes by the LCBC Member States and Benin in the affected areas, including the full restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs and refugees; and
- (iii) facilitate, within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected populations.

5. The experts agreed to establish the Headquarters of the Force in N'Djamena, Chad, as per the conclusions of the 5th meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence of the LCBC Member States of 20 January 2015, and proposed the establishment of a central military command and a Joint Coordination Mechanism that will have control over troops contributed by the LCBC Member States and Benin. They defined the Area of Operation of the Force based on the current areas of activities of the terrorist group, while allowing the Force Commander to seek the authorisation of the competent authorities of the LCBC for the extension of this Area should it be necessary.

6. They highlighted the importance of denying Boko Haram of any support it might build on the instrumentalisation of Islam, whose disapproval of and distance from the criminal activities of the group they affirmed. They agreed, in the framework of their communications, to undertake sensibilisation and counter-propaganda campaigns in this regard.

7. The representatives of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria announced contributions of 8 700 military, police and civilian personnel. Recalling the integrated and multidimensional nature of the Force, they agreed that the various contributions would reflect the various military units and police and civilian capacities necessary for the effective implementation of the mandate of the Force. They tasked a small group to work, in the coming days, on these details and to prepare an initial budget before they forward the Concept of Operations to the PSC for approval and forward transmission to the UN Security Council.

8. The participants expressed their profound gratitude to the authorities and people of Cameroon for the warm welcome and all the practical arrangements made to ensure the success of the meeting. They thanked the AU Commission for its effective facilitation, through its experts, of the different working groups of the meeting, and expressed appreciation to all the partners who have not waned in their multiform supports to the efforts of the countries of the region and regional and continental organisations.