

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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AU Convenes Nouakchott Process Meeting to Enhance Coordination, Information Sharing and Joint Operations Against Terrorism in the Sahel-Sahara Region

The African Union (AU), with the support of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) and the Government of the Republic of Senegal, convened the High-level Meeting on Collective Security Engagements to Counter Terrorist and Insurgent Threats in the Sahel-Sahara Region within the Framework of the Nouakchott Process, from 25 to 27 November 2024 in Dakar, Senegal. The meeting aimed at enhancing coordination, information and intelligence sharing, and joint operations in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel-Sahara region.

It was opened by Gen. Birame Diop, Minister of Armed Forces of the Republic of Senegal, and Dr Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, Director of Conflict Management at the African Union. It brought together heads of intelligence services of the Sahel-Sahara countries, particularly member states of the Nouakchott Process and the Accra Initiative, namely Algeria, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. Related institutions and mechanisms which participated in the meeting were the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Executive Secretariat of the Accra Initiative, the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit (RIFU), the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHSL), the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL) of the Sahel countries, the North African Regional Capability (NARC), and the African Union Counter-Terrorism Centre (CTC).

Participants noted with concern the continuing deterioration in the security situation in the Sahel-Sahara region, the West African Coastal Region, and the Lake Chad Basin. They highlighted the factors catalysing the expansion of terrorism and terrorist armed groups in the region, among which porous borders, political instability, including unconstitutional changes of government, poor governance, and climate change. These, they said, are sustained through targeted recruitment, kidnap for ransom, poaching, illegal exploitation of natural resources, in particular artisanal gold mining, logging, and smuggling of contraband, including drugs, counterfeit medicines, cigarettes and human trafficking, and banditry.

Participants underlined the need for member states to adopt comprehensive, multidimensional strategies using kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to cut off terrorist funding sources, ensure inclusive governance, education, youth employment, justice, law and order, and stabilisation of affected communities by establishing a responsive social contract as part of measures to counter the ideological basis of terrorism, prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation, working with religious and community leaders. They underscored the imperative of compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law in field operations, political dialogue, disarmament and rehabilitation, and regional stabilisation efforts.

The meeting ended on a high note, with member states recommitting to work together and leverage continental and regional mechanisms, using holistic approaches to combat terrorism and violent extremism across the region.

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