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Grand Rendez-vous 2023 Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) in West and Central Africa: Realities and Perspectives

28.02 - 02.03.2023, Dakar, Senegal

Summary of conclusions

Gathered in Dakar from February 28 to March 2, 2023, more than a hundred participants from some twenty countries - ministers, senior government officials, senior military officers, national and local elected officials, community and civil society representatives, researchers, and officials from regional and international organizations - took part in the "Grand Rendezvous for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in West and Central Africa: Realities and Perspectives", organized by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), and the Center for Advanced Studies in Defense and Security (CHEDS) of Senegal.

The general observation is that violent extremism and its various manifestations are spreading and continue to negatively impact states in West Africa, the Sahel, and Central Africa; they have not diminished since the UN Secretary-General launched his [Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism](#) (PVE) in December 2015, despite the efforts made at the military and security levels.

The participants discussed ways to prevent violent extremism by acting on its causes and reached the following conclusions, which they addressed to the States of the region, regional and subregional organizations, multilateral and bilateral partners, and all political, security and civil society leaders:

1. There is an urgent need to **systematically engage in concerted action by all relevant actors on the root causes of this violence and their reduction, both locally and nationally, as well as at the regional and international level.**
2. **Explicit and substantial integration of the PVE into the public policies and strategies of states and organizations in the region**, particularly ECOWAS, ECCAS and the African Union, as well as appropriate **means** and **structures**, are key to better integrate the prevention approach into the range of multidimensional responses to address the complexity of political, economic, social, and cultural factors that fuel violence.
3. The **creation of spaces for dialogue**, at the local, national, cross-border and regional levels, must be promoted as a central tool for violence prevention. Indeed, the existence of such spaces is essential to strengthen trust and solidarity in the relationship between states and citizens and the participation of all in public governance. The dialogue should be respectful of the contexts, adapted to the culture and inscribed in a dynamic of listening. **Political leaders** and **elected officials** have the primary responsibility to open and facilitate such spaces or frameworks for dialogue. **Dialogue must be ongoing.**

4. The participation of **local communities** in decisions that affect them is a guarantee of their security, development and peace. The effective existence of structures for political and social dialogue between the State and local communities, as well as the effective implementation of **decentralization** as an institutional policy, are central instruments of public governance. Strengthening these links requires an increased role for **local authorities, local elected officials and customary and religious leaders**.
5. The **defense and security forces (DSF)**, often the sole providers of state services in remote areas, have an active role to play in the PVE through a citizen-centered approach to human security. Security governance reform through context-specific SSR is essential, even in countries not affected by VE. Effective integration of the role of the DSF in the PVE into DSF doctrines, mandates, operational frameworks, and training is necessary to serve the population. In this regard, **dialogue between political leaders and the DSF, between the DSF and the population, and between the DSF themselves** is essential. It is important to capitalize on good practices, such as participatory community security systems, the Army-Nation concept, and the alignment of national security strategies with human security principles.
6. **Justice and respect for rights** are basic human needs. Working to ensure social justice, eliminate corruption, and reduce abuse, exclusion, human rights violations, impunity, and failures of the justice system is at the heart of the prevention effort. **Dialogue between justice actors and communities** allows for better access and mutual understanding for the resolution of disputes and conflicts. Ensuring the **rule of law** is essential for a relationship of trust between the citizen and the state. The use of **traditional conflict resolution mechanisms** also helps to satisfy the need for justice.
7. Giving **youth** a full place in decisions that affect them will be crucial to ensure that the current crisis does not bear the seeds of the next one. It is necessary to ensure spaces where youth can express their concerns, propose solutions and actively participate in their implementation. The promotion of **intergenerational dialogue** also fosters mutual understanding and acceptance. The strengthening of **formal and informal education** for all is one of the fundamental levers of the PVE.
8. The role of **women** in preserving peace in their society, while respecting their specificities and roles within communities, is more essential than ever. Including women in decision-making centers, including political and security ones, and making use of their cohesive strength within communities and families are PVE actions that must be fundamentally reinforced.
9. Strengthening **communication** between the various actors through appropriate channels (community radio, social networks and traditional media) and actively using these channels as vectors of cohesion and peace are likely to strengthen the PVE.
10. It is essential to take better account of the challenges of **land governance, natural resources, and climate change in relation to security**, and to forge new partnerships to address them effectively.
11. Promoting **cross-border cooperation** in connection with peace and security issues, actively involving local authorities and communities, makes it possible to create spaces that are useful for local life, where the different lifestyles of the populations can find their best balance.
12. Actors responsible for developing and implementing PVE policies and responses are encouraged to take ownership of the results of **research work** and analysis.

13. It is essential to invest in **capacity building for the PVE**, through PVE training programs, such as the one proposed by the African Union in partnership with Switzerland, or by integrating the PVE into the curricula of government and DSF training schools. Strengthening the acquisition of dialogue tools at the level of communities and local leaders is also recommended.
14. **Periodic sharing at the regional level** of experiences and progress must continue, in formal or informal settings, to build commitment and practice for violence prevention.
15. **Regional and continental organizations** have an active role to play in promoting the PVE approach. Formal inclusion of the PVE in the texts, active monitoring of their implementation by dedicated entities, as well as the establishment of institutional frameworks for consultation, are likely to strengthen this mobilization, in a coordinated manner, for sustainable solutions to the root causes of violence.
16. By providing technical and financial support, and by facilitating spaces for dialogue such as this Grand Rendez-vous for the PVE, **multilateral and bilateral partners** are actively contributing to a real integration of the PVE as an alternative response to armed violence.

Done in Dakar, on March 2, 2023.