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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL  
1237<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

23 OCTOBER 2024  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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**REPORT OF THE AU COMMISSION ON COMBATING TERRORISM IN THE CONTINENT**

## REPORT OF THE AU COMMISSION IN COMBATING TERRORISM IN THE CONTINENT

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. The threat of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa has intensified in 2024, with a marked increase in the frequency, scale, and geographic spread of attacks. This report consolidates data from April to July 2024, building on findings from the first quarter (January to March) and the 1208<sup>th</sup> Peace and Security Council (PSC) Meeting held in April 2024. It highlights major terrorist incidents across different regions, compares trends from both reporting periods, and provides a projection for the remainder of the year. Particular attention is given to evolving trends in terrorist activities, the effectiveness of counter-terrorism operations, and the political, social, and economic factors exacerbating these threats.

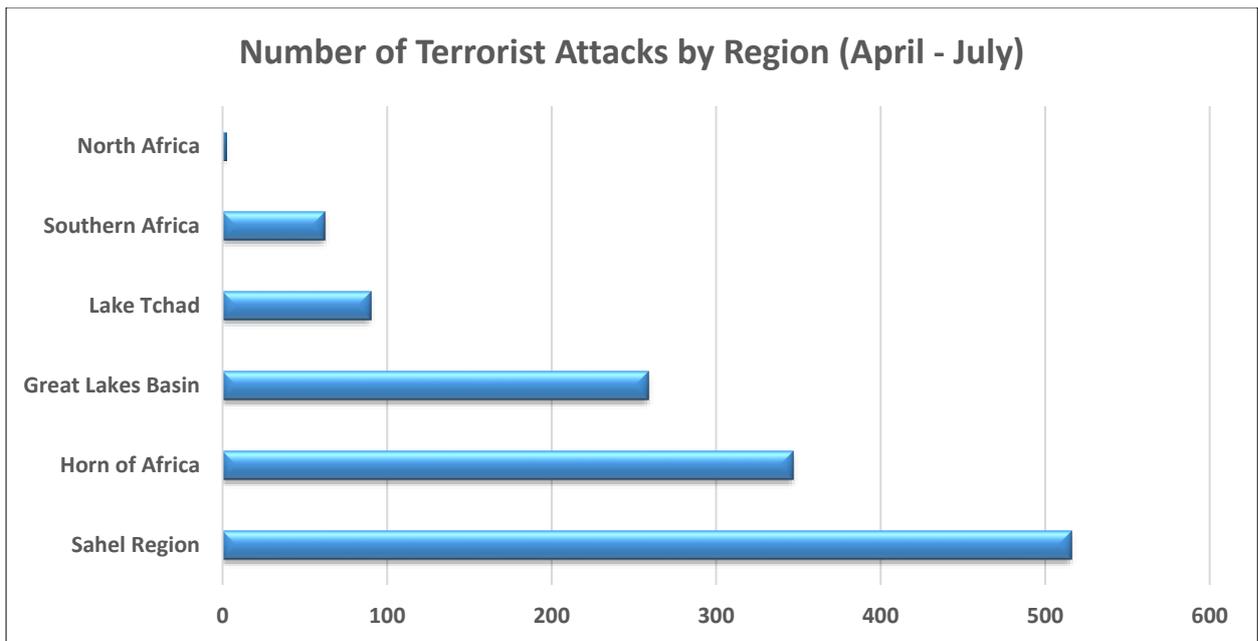
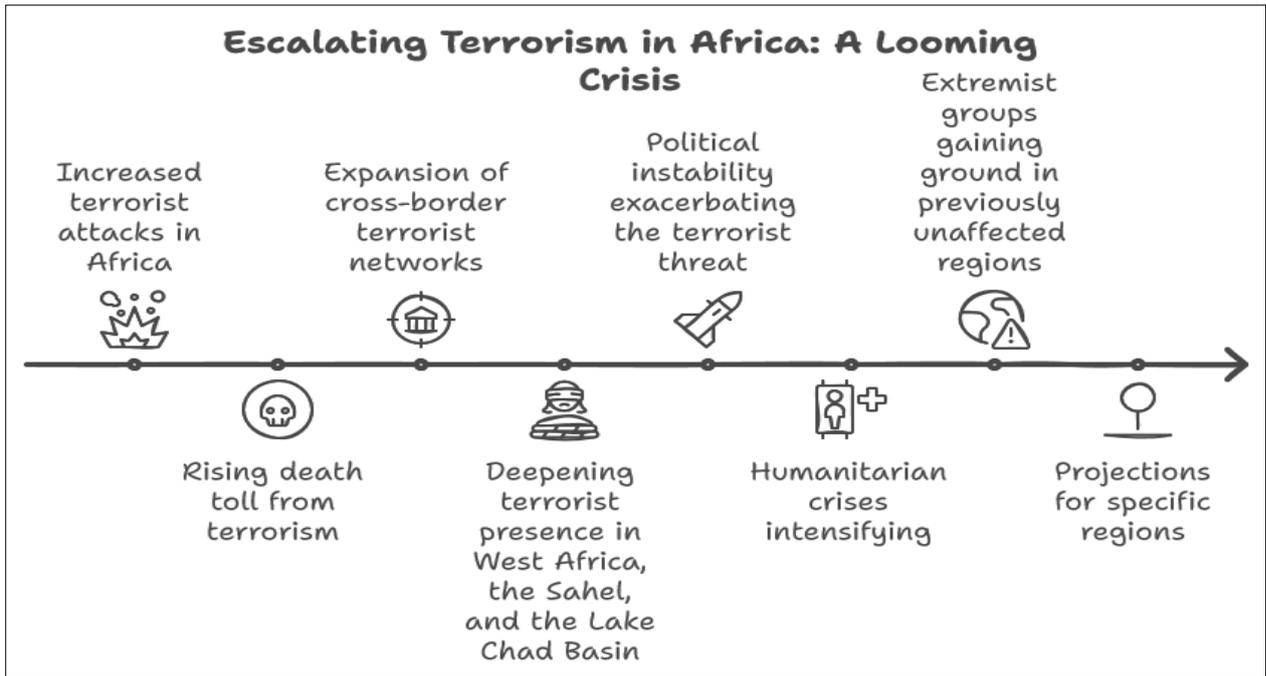
2. Additionally, the report offers a detailed regional breakdown, analyzing specific incidents, their broader implications, and responses by national governments, regional coalitions, and international partners. Comprehensive policy recommendations are provided, aiming to strengthen Africa's counter-terrorism architecture. These recommendations target national governments, regional bodies, African non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, and international organizations, emphasizing the need for renewed coordination, capacity building, and sustained international support.

### II. GENERAL OVERVIEW AND TRENDS OF THE TERRORISM THREAT IN AFRICA

#### A. OVERALL CONTINENTAL STATISTICS

3. The period from April to July 2024 saw a notable increase in the frequency and intensity of terrorist attacks across Africa, with more than 1,003 attacks resulting in over 4,818 deaths. This represents a 1.90 % increase in the number of attacks and a 33.30 % increase in casualties compared to the first quarter of 2024, demonstrating an increase in the lethality of terrorist incidents over the reporting period. Notably, civilian populations bore the brunt of these attacks, with rural communities and border regions being particularly affected. Terrorist groups have continued to adapt their tactics, employing more sophisticated technologies such as drones and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to maximize their impact.

4. Several regions have seen a worsening of the security situation, while others that were previously unaffected have now become targets for extremist violence. This expansion of the geographic footprint of terrorism in Africa presents a growing challenge for regional and international actors seeking to contain the threat. The dynamics of terrorism are shifting rapidly, with terrorist groups showing greater resilience and adaptability in response to military counter-terrorism operations.



**B. REGIONAL OVERVIEW**

5. The Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, East Africa, and parts of Central Africa have remained the primary theaters of terrorist activity. These regions continue to experience high levels of violence, driven by a combination of political instability, governance deficits, socio-economic challenges, and environmental degradation. At the same time, coastal West Africa has seen an alarming increase in cross-border incursions by terrorist groups, with attacks spreading into Benin, Togo, and Ghana.

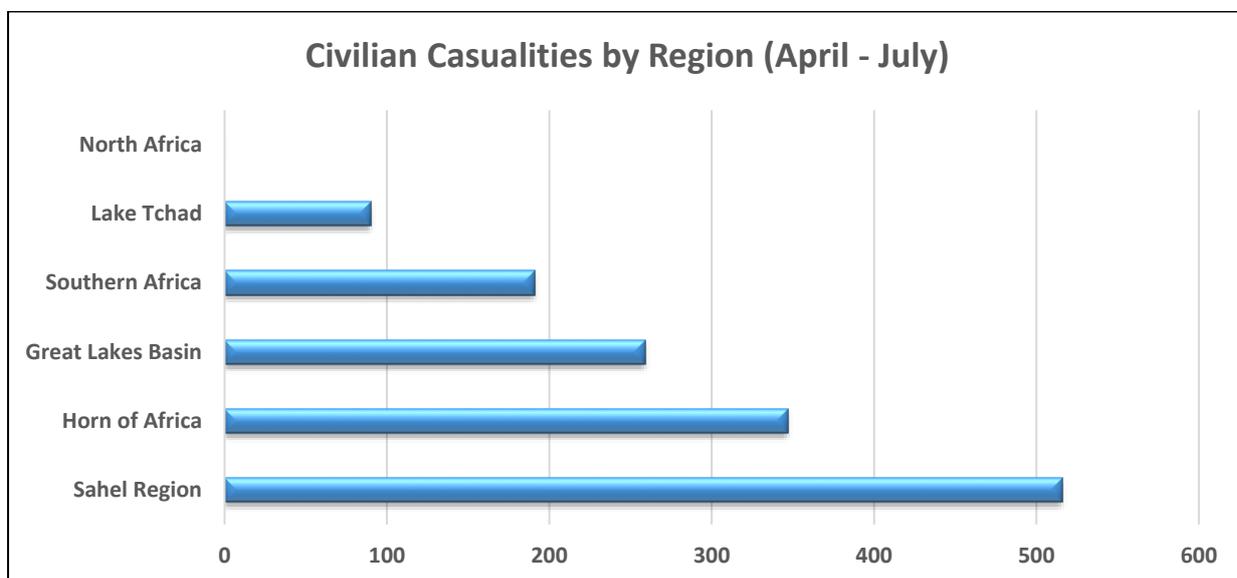
6. In the Sahel, terrorist groups like Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) have taken advantage of political vacuums and the collapse of regional security initiatives like the G5-Sahel. Meanwhile, in the Lake Chad Basin, Boko Haram and

Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) continue to pose a significant threat to Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad, despite concerted efforts by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

**C. MOST AFFECTED AREAS**

7. During this period, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Cameroon remained the most affected countries, accounting for over 79% of all attacks and 80% of terrorism related deaths. Burkina Faso remains the most severely impacted country, witnessing 2,253 deaths from April to July 2024 alone even if Somalia recorded 322 attacks with 848 casualties.

8. Mali, likewise, has seen deterioration in its security situation, with northern regions becoming increasingly difficult for government forces and their allies to control. In the DRC, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an affiliate of the Islamic State, has intensified its attacks in the eastern provinces, contributing to a worsening humanitarian crisis.



9. The April 2024 report forecasted a continued rise in attacks, and by July, this trend was confirmed. While there has been some stabilization in North Africa, the Sahel and Great Lake region have seen further deterioration. Additionally, maritime piracy and armed insurgency re-emerged in East Africa, notably in Somalia and Mozambique, signaling the diversification of terrorist tactics.

**III. CONTINENTAL TERRORISM THREAT ASSESSMENT**

10. **Sahel Belt of West Africa.** The Sahel region remains the epicenter of terrorist activity in Africa. Despite extensive military operations, including the involvement of foreign mercenaries such as the Wagner Group (now rebranded as Africa Corps), terrorist groups like JNIM and ISGS have maintained their strongholds, particularly in the Liptako-Gourma region. This area, which straddles the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, has become one of the most dangerous zones in Africa, with frequent attacks on military installations, civilian convoys, and local communities.

11. Civilian casualties accounting for **66%** of total deaths in the Sahel while the **Liptako-Gourma** (the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) accounted for **36% of all terrorist activities** in the region, making it one of the most violent zones on the continent.

12. The collapse of the G5-Sahel in 2024 and the closing of the MINUSMA in December 2023, has left a significant gap in regional security cooperation, further exacerbating the situation. Without a coordinated regional framework to address the growing threat, individual countries have struggled to contain the spread of violence. As a result, terrorist groups have expanded their operations, increasing their influence and control over vast swathes of territory.

13. Major incidents in the Sahel during this period include the July 2024 ambush of a joint convoy of Malian and Wagner forces in northern Mali, which resulted in over 120 deaths, and a June 2024 attack on a military base in eastern Burkina Faso that left 60 soldiers dead.

14. **Coastal States of West Africa.** The spread of terrorism into coastal West Africa has accelerated in 2024, with Benin, Togo, and Ghana becoming increasingly vulnerable to cross-border incursions by JNIM and ISGS. The once-theoretical threat of terrorism in these coastal states has now become a reality, as these groups seek to destabilize the region and expand their influence.

15. Benin and Togo have seen a particularly sharp rise in attacks (21% increase), with northern Benin recording its deadliest incident to date in May 2024, when a militant attack on a military outpost resulted in the deaths of 17 soldiers. In Togo's Savane region, attacks on military and civilian targets increased by 60%, with JNIM militants carrying out cross-border raids that have forced the government to declare a state of emergency in affected areas.

16. These developments have raised concerns about the ability of coastal West African states to prevent the further spread of extremism. Without adequate regional cooperation and support from the international community, there is a risk that these countries could become the next frontier in the fight against terrorism in Africa.

17. **Lake Chad Basin.** The Lake Chad Basin remains a critical hotspot for terrorism, with Boko Haram and ISWAP continuing to dominate the region. Despite the best efforts of the MNJTF, both groups have shown remarkable resilience, retaining control over significant territories in northeastern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, and parts of Chad.

18. The period from April to July 2024 saw a 15% increase in attacks in the Lake Chad Basin and 92% increase in civilian casualties, with ISWAP in particular demonstrating its growing sophistication by utilizing drones for reconnaissance and targeted attacks. One of the deadliest incidents during this period occurred in August 2024, when ISWAP ambushed a Nigerian military convoy near Maiduguri, killing 25 soldiers. The use of drones to gather intelligence before launching the attack underscores the increasing technological capabilities of terrorist groups in the region.

19. The humanitarian impact of the ongoing violence in the Lake Chad Basin is severe, with millions of people displaced and in urgent need of assistance. While the MNJTF has had some success in securing key towns and degrading the logistical capabilities of Boko Haram, the influx of arms and fighters from Libya and the Sahel continues to pose a major challenge.

20. **East and Horn of Africa.** In East Africa, Al-Shabaab remains the dominant terrorist group, with Somalia bearing the brunt of its attacks. Between April and July 2024, Al-Shabaab increased its attacks by 90%, with a series of high-profile incidents underscoring the group's capacity to strike both military and civilian targets.

21. **Somalia** accounted for **80% of terrorist incidents** in East Africa, with **Kenya** and **Ethiopia** facing periodic attacks on their border regions. The death toll from Al-Shabaab attacks in Somalia exceeded **1,000** during this period, marking a significant rise compared to earlier months.

22. One of the most significant incidents during this period was a July 2024 assault on an African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) base in Mogadishu, which resulted in the deaths of 30 soldiers. Al-Shabaab's ability to carry out such a coordinated and devastating attack, despite the presence of international forces, highlights the persistent threat the group poses to the stability of Somalia and the broader region.

23. **Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region.** The security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR) has continued to deteriorate, with insurgent groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) exploiting political instability and weak governance to expand their operations.

24. In the DRC, the ADF has intensified its attacks in the eastern provinces, with over 500 deaths attributed to the group between April and July 2024. **Violence in eastern DRC** escalated by **147%** between April and July 2024. The ADF's brutal tactics, including the use of IEDs and attacks on civilian populations, have contributed to a worsening humanitarian crisis in the region.

25. In CAR, clashes between government forces and **CPC** insurgents led to the displacement of **60,000 people** in the first half of 2024.

26. Meanwhile, in CAR, clashes between government forces and CPC insurgents have led to the displacement of **60,000 people** in the first half of 2024, further compounding the already dire security and humanitarian situation in the country.

27. **North Africa and the Maghreb.** While North Africa has remained relatively stable compared to other regions, there have been isolated incidents of terrorism, particularly in Libya. The lack of a central government in Libya and the presence of various extremist factions continue to pose a threat to regional stability.

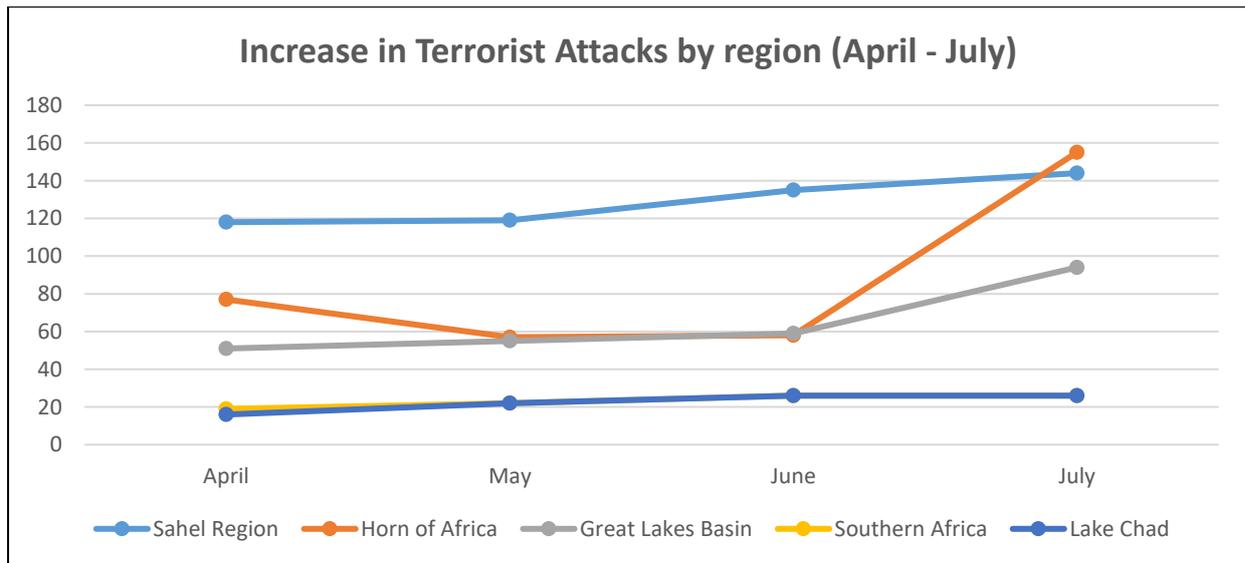
28. In June 2024, clashes between rival militias and extremist groups in southern Libya resulted in the deaths of 25 combatants. These groups, often linked to transnational terrorist networks, have the potential to destabilize neighboring countries by facilitating the smuggling of arms and fighters across borders.

29. Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco have successfully disrupted several terrorist cells through coordinated efforts, intelligence-sharing networks and security measures, thereby, preventing potential attacks across the region. However, these countries remain concerned about the fragile security situation in Libya and the potential for extremist groups to exploit the ongoing instability.

30. **Sothern Africa African and Northern Mozambique.** Terrorism in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, led by Ahlu-Sunnawa-Jama'a (ASWJ), an affiliate of the Islamic State, has seen a significant escalation in violence between April and July 2024. Despite increased military interventions by Mozambican and Rwandan forces, the insurgents have continued to expand their operations, particularly in rural areas.

31. Over **191 civilians** were killed in the **Cabo Delgado** region between **April and July 2024**.The insurgency has driven the displacement of over **500,000 people**, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

32. In July 2024, ASWJ militants attacked several villages in Mocímboa da Praia, killing 100 civilians in one of the deadliest incidents in Mozambique this year. The insurgents have also targeted local populations and disrupted economic activities, particularly in areas surrounding the liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects.



#### IV. OBSERVED CHANGES IN THE THREAT SITUATION

33. Since the previous reporting period (January to March 2024), several key changes have been observed:

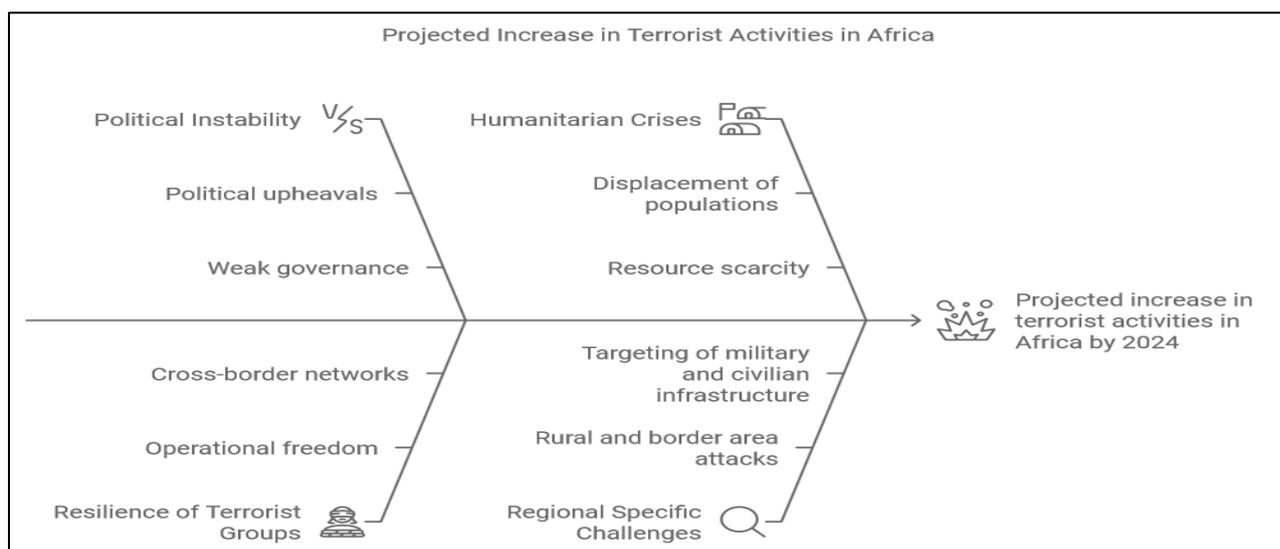
- i. **Increase in Attacks and Casualties.** Across the continent, the number of terrorist attacks has increased by 20% compared to the first quarter of 2024. The rise is particularly notable in West Africa, with significant increases in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Casualties have also risen, with a 15% increase in both civilian and security force deaths;
- ii. **Political and Geopolitical Shifts:** Political instability continues to exacerbate security challenges. In the Sahel, unconstitutional changes of governments have shifted the dynamics of counterterrorism operations, with military priorities focusing on political consolidation rather than security. This shift has allowed terrorist groups greater operational freedom;
- iii. **Collapse of Regional Security Mechanisms:** The dissolution of the G5-Sahel and the closing of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) on 31 December 2023, after 10 years of presence, has created a security vacuum in the Sahel, allowing terrorist groups to operate with greater impunity. This has led to an increase in attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, with cross-border incursions becoming more frequent;
- iv. **Resilience of Key Terrorist Groups:** Despite ongoing military operations, groups like Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and ISWAP have demonstrated remarkable resilience, maintaining their operational capabilities and continuing to carry out high-profile attacks. The persistence of these groups highlights the complexity of the terrorism threat in Africa and the need for a multifaceted approach to counter-terrorism;
- v. **Southward Spread of Terrorism:** Coastal West Africa has become a new frontline in the fight against terrorism, with Benin and Togo witnessing a 40% increase in attacks compared to the first quarter of 2024. Jihadist groups have exploited the porous borders and weak security infrastructure in these regions to expand their territorial control; and
- vi. **Technological Advancements:** The increasing use of drones and other sophisticated technologies by terrorist groups, particularly ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin and Al-Shabaab in

East Africa, has changed the operational landscape. These technologies have enabled terrorist groups to conduct more precise and lethal attacks, often targeting military convoys and civilian infrastructure.

**V. EARLY WARNING AND SECURITY OUTLOOK FOR 2024**

34. Based on the trends observed in both reporting periods (January-March and April-July 2024), the outlook for the remainder of the year remains concerning. If current trends continue, the continent could witness over 3,500 terrorist attacks by the end of 2024, resulting in more than 18,000 deaths. The following projections are made for key regions:

- i. **Sahel and West Africa:** The instability created by political upheavals and the operational freedom of jihadist groups in the Sahel will likely result in a 10-15% increase in terrorist activities, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger;
- ii. **Lake Chad Basin:** Boko Haram and ISWAP will likely continue their operations, with a 5-10% increase in attacks, particularly in northeastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon;
- iii. **East Africa:** Al-Shabaab is expected to maintain its operational tempo in Somalia, with a projected 5-10% increase in attacks, particularly in border regions with Kenya; and
- iv. **Coastal West Africa:** The spread of terrorism into coastal states such as Benin and Togo is expected to intensify, with a projected 15-20% increase in cross-border incursions by JNIM and ISGS.



**VI. EFFORTS OF THE AU COMMISSION TO PREVENT AND COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM**

35. The African Union (AU) continues to play a critical role in coordinating counter-terrorism (CT) efforts across the continent. Key operational responses include:

- i. **Horn of Africa:** Ongoing support for the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to combat Al-Shabaab;

- ii. **Lake Chad Basin:** Continued collaboration with the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to counter Boko Haram and ISWAP in Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon;
  - iii. **Sahel:** Efforts to strengthen regional security cooperation following the dissolution of the G5-Sahel, with a focus on cross-border counter-terrorism operations, through the re-launching of the Nouakchott Process and increased cooperation with the existing Mechanism, including Sahel-UFL;
  - iv. **Great Lakes Region:** Support for Congolese and Central African forces in their fight against insurgent groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC); and
  - v. **Northern Mozambique:** Coordination with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), through its Regional CT Centre and increased consultations with Member States in the region in order to stabilize Cabo Delgado.
36. The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) has been actively engaged in supporting member states through:
- i. **Capacity Building:** Providing technical assistance to enhance the capabilities of national security forces in areas such as counter-IED operations and the use of technology by terrorists, countering violent extremists and the development of national and regional CT Strategies and Plans of Actions;
  - ii. **Information Sharing:** Expanding the ACSRT's real-time information-sharing platform to improve regional cooperation and response to terrorist threats; and
  - iii. **Research and Early Warning:** Conducting research on emerging terrorism trends and providing early warning analysis to inform policy and operational responses.

## VII. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

37. Africa is at a critical juncture in its fight against terrorism and violent extremism. The trends observed in 2024 suggest that without decisive action, the continent could face further destabilization, with significant humanitarian and security implications. The persistence and expansion of terrorist activities across key regions highlight the need for a coordinated, multifaceted approach to counter-terrorism that addresses both the root causes of extremism and the operational capabilities of terrorist groups.

38. **Based on the above analysis the following recommendations can be made:**

- I. **Strengthening the AU Counter-Terrorism Architecture:** The AU PSC Sub-Committee on Counter-Terrorism must be operationalized immediately to enhance real-time monitoring and intervention capabilities. In this regard, **requests** the African Union Counter Terrorism Centre (AUCTC), Peace and Security Council Secretariat in collaboration with the Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Counterterrorism Focal Point to immediately report back to the Peace and Security Council on the steps taken to operationalize the Sub-Committee ; The African Standby Force (ASF) should also be deployed in the most affected regions, such as the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin;

- II. **Enhancing International Cooperation:** African non-permanent members of the UN Security Council should advocate for sustained international support for African-led counter-terrorism initiatives. This should include securing funding for the MNJTF and other regional coalitions, as well as strengthening intelligence-sharing mechanisms;
- III. **Addressing Root Causes:** Socio-economic development programs must accompany military interventions, particularly in regions suffering from poverty, unemployment, and governance deficits, which are key drivers of radicalization. Climate change adaptation programs should also be integrated into national security strategies, particularly in regions like the Sahel, where environmental degradation exacerbates local grievances;
- IV. **Technological and Tactical Enhancements:** Investments in counter-IED technologies and the development of joint task forces dedicated to combating the use of drones and other advanced technologies by extremist groups are critical. Enhanced training in intelligence-led operations, cyber warfare, drone detection, and counter-IED technologies is essential for security forces to stay ahead of terrorist innovations. In this regard, Direct the African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (AUCPCRD) in collaboration with the Africa Union Counter-Terrorism Centre (AUCTC) to develop programmes to support building strong and resilient state institutions in counter-terrorism and post-territorial defeat efforts; and
- V. **Implementing Previous Decisions and Declarations:** Underlines the importance of fully implementing the Malabo Declaration on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government, including the development of Comprehensive Continental Strategic Plan of Action on countering terrorism in Africa and the Abuja Process Declaration of April 2024 and requests the AU Commission, working with the African Union Counter Terrorism Centre (AUCTC) and the Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Counterterrorism Focal Point to submit a detailed report on efforts to implement the Malabo and Abuja Declarations to the Peace and Security Council.

#### VIII. **KEY OBSERVATIONS**

39. Several key observations can be drawn from the current terrorism landscape in Africa:
  - i. **Resilience and Adaptability of Terrorist Groups:** Despite sustained military operations across several regions, terrorist groups such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Boko Haram, ISWAP, and Al-Shabaab have shown remarkable resilience. These groups have adapted to counter-terrorism operations by diversifying their tactics, adopting new technologies like drones, and exploiting weaknesses in state security forces, allowing them to retain significant operational capabilities;
  - ii. **Increased Use of Sophisticated Technologies:** A key trend observed during the reporting period is the increasing use of commercially available technologies, particularly drones, for reconnaissance and attacks by terrorist groups such as ISWAP and Al-Shabaab. This technological advancement has given these groups a tactical edge, allowing them to launch more coordinated and precise attacks on military and civilian targets;
  - iii. **Southward Expansion of Terrorism:** The spillover of terrorism into coastal West Africa, especially in countries like Benin, Togo, and Ghana, highlights the southward expansion of extremist activities. This trend indicates that previously unaffected regions are now becoming new theaters of conflict, driven by porous borders, weak security infrastructure, and the strategic objectives of terrorist groups to destabilize the Gulf of Guinea region;

- iv. **Impact of the Collapse of the G5-Sahel:** The dissolution of the G5-Sahel in 2024 has left a significant security vacuum in the region, further weakening the coordination of counter-terrorism efforts among Sahelian countries. This has emboldened terrorist groups, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, where cross-border attacks have increased, and terrorist networks have gained operational freedom;
- v. **Political Instability and Unconstitutional Changes of Government:** Political instability, particularly in the Sahel region, has diverted state resources from counter-terrorism operations to political consolidation. Unconstitutional changes of government (UCGs) in countries like Niger have also shifted the focus of national security forces away from combatting terrorism, giving extremist groups the opportunity to strengthen their foothold in certain areas;
- vi. **Growing Humanitarian Crisis:** The protracted nature of conflicts in regions such as the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel, and northern Mozambique has contributed to a worsening humanitarian crisis. Millions of people have been displaced, with local populations suffering from food insecurity, lack of access to essential services, and persistent violence. The humanitarian toll underscores the need for comprehensive responses that integrate security interventions with development and humanitarian assistance;
- vii. **Regional and International Coordination Gaps:** Although there have been efforts to coordinate regional responses through entities like the African Union and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the lack of sustained international support and predictable funding remains a challenge. In addition, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, though improved in some regions, are still inconsistent, limiting the effectiveness of joint counter-terrorism operations;
- viii. **Emergence of New Terrorist Hotspots:** New hotspots for terrorist activities have emerged in regions like northern Benin, Togo, and eastern DRC, where insurgent groups have intensified their operations. This geographical shift highlights the need for an adaptive response strategy that addresses the changing nature of the threat across the continent;
- ix. **Mercenaries and Pro-Government Militias:** The increasing reliance on mercenaries, such as the Wagner Group (rebranded as Africa Corps), and pro-government militias, especially in the Sahel and other conflict zones, has raised concerns about future disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts. While these groups have played a role in containing the immediate threat, their presence complicates long-term stability and governance efforts; and
- x. **Root Causes of Terrorism Remain Unaddressed:** Despite ongoing counter-terrorism operations, many of the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty, unemployment, marginalization, and environmental degradation, remain unaddressed. In regions like the Sahel, local grievances continue to fuel recruitment into terrorist groups, underscoring the need for comprehensive approaches that combine military efforts with socio-economic development and governance reforms.

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2024-10-23

# Communiqué of the 1237th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 23 October 2024 on the Consideration of the AU Commission Report on Combating Terrorism in the Continent.

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