



**GCTF**

GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM FORUM

**FGCT**

FORUM GLOBAL DE LA LUTTE  
CONTRE LE TERRORISME

## **SAHEL WORKING GROUP**

### **CO-CHAIR'S SUMMARY**

**16-17 NOVEMBER 2011, ALGIERS**

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**Co-chairs comments:** This report was drafted by Algeria and Canada, co-chairs of the Sahel working group of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum. The report intends to capture discussions about threats, capacity gaps and recommendations identified during the inaugural Sahel working group meeting which took place on 16-17 November 2011 in Algiers. The meeting was not recorded and there is no formal transcript.

## Executive summary

On 16-17 November 2011, in Algiers, Algeria and Canada co-chaired the first Sahel working group (SWG) meeting of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF). Over 180 participants, including Sahel and neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea-Conakry, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Tunisia) and international organisations (African Union/CAERT, United Nations, Interpol) took part in this inaugural meeting. Participants included representatives from Foreign Ministries, Departments of Justice, Interior and Defence. Based on the SWG work plan, the two day meeting addressed the following topics during six panels with expert speakers launching the discussions: (1) Threat in Sahel; (2) Border Security; (3) Legislative and Judicial cooperation; (4) Outreach and Community Engagement; (5) Countering the Financing of Terrorism; (6) Police cooperation.

Following introductions from both the GCTF and SWG co-chairs, participants provided frank insights into challenges facing counter terrorism efforts in the Sahel noting in particular: porous borders, lack of information exchange and coordination of efforts, instability in neighbouring countries and growing cooperation between terrorist organisations. Among key recommendations were: building the capacity of Sahel countries through increased training and provision of equipment, enhancing coordination of domestic security services, increasing regional cooperation at the technical expert level, and greater Government engagement with community and traditional leaders to build confidence and counter violent extremism.

Looking ahead, regional and extra regional countries are encouraged to collaborate and host technical expert level meetings on each of the priority areas. To date, several expert level meetings are being planned: (1) In May 2012, Niger and the US will organise a border security workshop of experts from the Sahel in Niamey, Niger; (2) In late 2012, Switzerland will invite experts to an Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) seminar to examine best practices and procedures. This event will take place in a country of the Sahel; (3) Denmark will seek collaboration with a Sahel country towards

strengthening Community Engagement; (4) Morocco has offered to training in the areas of Police cooperation and Judicial and Legislative cooperation.

## **Introductions and Welcome**

- Mr. Mohamed Kamel Rezag Bara, Special Advisor to the President of the Republic, Algeria;
- Ms. Sabine Nolke, Director General Major Programs Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Canada;
- Ambassador Daniel Benjamin, Coordinator for Counter Terrorism, United States Department of State, United States, Global Counter Terrorism Forum co-chair;
- Mr. Mekin Mustafa Kemal Okem, Head of Department, Security and Intelligence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey, Global Counter Terrorism Forum co-chair;
- Mr. Abdelazziz Sebaa, Chief of Staff, Office of the Minister responsible for Maghreb and African Affairs.

Mr. Rezag Bara launched the SWG by welcoming all participants. US, GCTF co-chair, Ambassador Daniel Benjamin expressed his delight with the level of participation, especially by the number of Sahel countries in attendance. He spoke about the increasingly complex threat in the Sahel in light of the situation in Libya, adding that the need to build partnerships is important and urgent. He described the GCTF as an action oriented, informal and multilateral forum to enhance global cooperation on civilian led counter terrorism capacity building. He added that the GCTF is designed to bring greater coherence to international efforts and maximize the impact of counter terrorism cooperation. Ambassador Benjamin acknowledged that there will be different approaches and that what works in one country, may not work in another. However, the GCTF is committed to working together. Turkey, GCTF co-chair, Mr. Mekin Mustafa Kemal Okem from Turkey highlighted the shrinking distances and barriers in the world today, rendering combatting terrorism a shared global responsibility requiring international solidarity. He added that the GCTF will build capacity; provide opportunities for the sharing of expertise towards action oriented results with the working groups playing a critical role.

Canadian SWG co-chair, Ms. Sabine Nolke welcomed participants, in particular those from Sahel countries as they are on the front lines to combatting terrorism in the region. While the SWG benefits from many experts, its efforts will have to be directed by countries of the Sahel to ensure it is regionally focused. Ms. Nolke described the GCTF as an ambitious and inclusive initiative aiming to complement existing strategies and efforts such as those of the African Union, the EU and the “Pays du Champs”. The SWG will work towards determining problems, identifying solutions, and mobilizing resources. Future meetings of the SWG will be regionally-driven, expert level events intended to identify concrete recommendations and sustainable projects. She added that the SWG is intended to be a clearing house for action. Ms. Nolke encouraged all participants to set aside prepared remarks and political matters to allow for a frank discussion about challenges and solutions adding that the need for regional cooperation has never been greater.

Mr. Abdelazziz Sebaa provided remarks on behalf of the Algerian Minister responsible for Maghreb and African Affairs, Abdelkader Messahel. He highlighted the link between terrorism, crime and poverty describing the parallel “Pays du Champs” process including its September 2011 Conference on Partnerships in Algiers, as a joint effort led by Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger which

addressed the intertwined challenges on a sub-regional level. He added that there is a relationship of complementarity between the SWG and les “Pays du Champs” process. The SWG launch was described as a landmark event in establishing cooperation to eradicate terrorism and organised crime.

## **Panel I – Threat in the Sahel**

### Presenters

- M. Abdelaziz Tebbi-Annani, Chef d'études de la Présidence de la République, Algeria
- Mr. Francisco José Caetano Madeira, Executive Director, African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism (CAERT)

Below is a summary of the presentations made by the panel speakers:

The first panel was dedicated to providing an overall description of the threat in the Sahel. The challenges described touched upon capacity building gaps in the five priority areas covered in the subsequent panels. Recommendations included training, equipment, cross border coordination and timely information sharing. While increasing Government presence in remote areas and engagement with community leaders was highlighted for countering violent extremism. Cooperation between AQIM, Boko Haram and Al Shabaab was noted with concern, as was the effects of neighbouring instability, primarily in Libya. Regarding Libya, there are worries that former combatants and weapons have made their way into the Sahel and could embolden existing terrorist organisations to increase or stage new attacks.

### Threats and Gaps:

- The terrorist threat is shaped by three main terrorist organisations: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM – north eastern Mauritania, northern Mali, Niger, northern Nigeria and south western Algeria); Boko Haram in Nigeria (has increased its operations since summer 2011), and Al Shabaab in Somalia. It is suspected that they cooperate and share best practices.
- AQIM's primary source of financing is kidnapping. In some cases, kidnapping is outsourced to criminals.
- Crime (ex: trafficking and piracy) is closely intertwined with terrorism. Traffickers from Latin America seek to facilitate the movement of drugs, humans, vehicles, falsified documents and other contraband goods through the Sahel onto other destinations outside of Africa.
- The instability in Libya has heightened insecurity, caused by the increased flow of economic migrants, combatants and weapons.
- Lack of employment, education, poverty, and basic services contribute to radicalization.
- Existing challenges in tracking the movement of funds used for illicit activities.
- Lack of counter terrorism legislation (including on cyber security to detect and monitor and counter threats).
- Weakness of law enforcement
- Porous borders.
- Complexity of issues in the Sahel (different populations, geographies, challenges, ect.)

- Delay in information exchange amongst security services.

#### Recommendations:

- Sahel countries to lead and take ownership of their counter terrorism capacity challenges.
- Adoption of national and regional counter terrorism strategies, in the framework of existing initiatives such as the Pays du Champs' Conference on Partnerships, the African Union and the UN.
- Implement existing counter terrorism instruments such as UN counter terrorism strategy, ECOWAS counter terrorism strategy, African Union, Organisation for African Unity.
- Build law enforcement capacity.
- Enhance coordination within each country and with its neighbours.
- Centralise coordination of activity to increase timely exchange of operational information to coordinate action.
- Support to existing regional organisations and initiatives.
- Use informal channels for counter radicalization efforts.
- Maintain dialogue with radicalized groups for possible reintegration.
- Link counter terrorism initiatives with social and economic development.
- Provide sustainable training and equipment.

#### Comments:

- The African Union's Centre Africain d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Terrorisme (CAERT) indicated that it is working to develop the framework for an Africa-wide arrest warrant system and a listing of individuals linked to crime and terrorism.
- Links between counter terrorism and development was highlighted numerous times.
- Need for sustainable and tailored training and equipment in areas: intelligence gathering and analysis, borders, immigrations and customs, judges and prosecutors, capacity to track the financing of terrorism and working with communities to counter violent extremism). This was highlighted during every panel.

## **Panel II – Border security**

#### Presenters

- Youba Amadou, Directeur des relations extérieures et point focal du centre d'étude et de recherche sur le terrorisme, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, de la Coopération, de l'Intégration africaine et des Nigériens, Niger
- Mr. Michael Smith, Executive Director, United Nations' Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UN CTED)

Below is a summary of the presentations made by the panel speakers:

Vast, unguarded and porous borders within the Sahel were highlighted as major causes for concern. Coordinated cross border training and use of equipment would facilitate collaboration and the exchange of information. The legal framework must exist to provide the border officials

with the mandate and authority to effectively secure the borders. While collection of duty is an important stream of income, an equal amount of attention should be delegated towards security. The need for an African-wide arrest warrant, to facilitate extradition, was recommended.

#### Threats and Gaps:

- Vast borders are porous and unguarded.
- Permissive area for illicit trafficking from Latin America.
- Weak legislation to prosecute.
- The focus should be on security. It is currently on collecting income/duty.
- Documentation fraud.
- Corrupt border officials.
- Uncoordinated training, equipment, computer systems, and work culture on either side of the border.

#### Recommendations:

- Train custom guards, gendarmerie, intelligence officials, prosecutors, judicial, law enforcement.
- Include land and air crossings when considering border security.
- Ensure interoperability of security services on both sides of border by harmonizing the training and equipment use, ensuring regular meetings, opportunities for planning and ensuring cooperation.
- Ensure robust legislation to enable apprehension and prosecution.
- Create agreements for quick information exchange between services and countries (and foster a culture of sharing).
- Create mobile patrols and consider right of pursuit.
- Increased aerial surveillance.
- Treat border security as a global problem given the outside influencers (ex: drugs, weapons, and combatants) coming into Sahel.
- Engage with population living along the border areas, acknowledge traditional methods of border management and address their grievances. In return, they may share valuable information and encourage locals to join the border guards and other security services (ex: police, military).
- Develop social and economic opportunities in desert border regions.
- Alternative surveillance mechanisms should be employed such as: aerial surveillance and unpredictable operations (ex: Mauritania monitors its borders with a mobile force).
- Create bilateral border committees to promote interoperability.
- Construction of trans-Sahel road.

#### Comments:

- Many international organisations currently involved: CAERT, United Nations (primarily Office of Drug and Crime and International Civil Aviation Organisation), Interpol, and the World Customs Organisation.

- The borders are invisible to some: residents have crossed the borders for centuries.
- The need and desire for an African-wide arrest warrant, inspired from the European-wide warrant to facilitate extradition, was highlighted several times.

## **Panel III – Legislative and Judicial cooperation**

### Presenters

- Ambassador Dr. Ashraf Mohsen, Counter Terrorism Coordinator, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt
- Mr. Ilias Chatzis, Programme Officer, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Below is a summary of the presentations made by the panel speakers:

It was noted that all countries in the Sahel have developed legal frameworks to address terrorism. However training is required to build capacity and expertise of judicial officials to effectively implement existing measures. With the retention of trained officials being important, plans should be developed to ensure low staff turnover. It was also suggested that terrorism should be treated as a crime and prosecuted as such. To better coordinate efforts in cooperation, harmonization of existing legislation in the Sahel and Africa was mentioned along with promoting knowledge between states of their legislation. In addition, the development of a regional instrument for mutual assistance and extradition was mentioned several times and recommendations were made towards developing an Africa-wide arrest warrant.

### Threat and Gaps:

- Terrorists operating without being accountable for their actions.
- Cooperation between terrorists and criminal organisations (ex: trafficking).
- Lack of capacity to fully implement ratified treaties and domestic laws.
- Lack of training/professional development and means for judicial authorities.
- High turnover within the judiciary of judges and prosecutors trained in handling terrorism cases.
- Criminals and terrorists attempt to portray their cause as revolutionaries or freedom fighters to attract individuals and support.

### Recommendations:

- Regional or international organisation should conduct assessment of Sahel to define the need for training in each country.
- Experts are required to be trained and provided with the appropriate equipment.
- Address terrorism as a criminal phenomenon.
- Terrorism must be fought with respect for the Rule of Law and Human Rights.
- Strengthening central authorities in Sahel once staffed and trained and insuring retention of resources.
- Implement the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.
- Review existing legislation in Sahel and Africa to enhance regional sharing of knowledge and expertise.

- Increase the forensic, analytical and investigative capabilities.
- Joint training within Sahel will also allow colleagues from different countries to meet and form informal networks to share knowledge and build confidence to better coordinate and cooperate.
- Develop plan to retain trained staff so they can remain, share knowledge and grow within the organisation or judicial system.
- Develop specialized training to overcome differences between common and civil law systems.

#### Comments:

- All countries in the Sahel already have domestic legislation criminalizing acts of terrorism and a legal framework for cooperation. For example there are 12 UN Conventions on counter terrorism. Other legal framework for cooperation exist (AU, OIC) and allow for extradition.
- Morocco has offered to train prosecutors.

## **Panel IV – Community engagement**

#### Presenters

- Mr. Babahamane Maiga, Technical Advisor, Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales, Mali
- Mr. Manuel Lopez Blanco, Coordinator for the EU Sahel Strategy, European External Action Service

Below is a summary of the presentations made by the panel speakers:

The importance of Government engagement with traditional and religious leaders was a key message from this panel along with addressing the grievances of marginalised populations and addressing development and economic gaps as part of countering violent extremism. It was explained that a lack of basic services and poverty are used as leverage by terrorists when seeking to recruit fighters and supporters to their cause. Ensuring that religious leaders are engaged will help defeat terrorists' misinterpretation and misuse of religion to justify their actions. Outreach, such as multimedia messaging, will build confidence in the population and encourage citizens to cooperate with Government officials. With each community being unique, a customised approach is required.

#### Threat and Gaps:

- Groups legitimizing terrorist actions by using religion – many are also foreign fighters.
- Lack of Government presence becomes a permissive area for insecurity and terrorism to settle down and operate.
- Lack of interaction with local leaders is a missed opportunity to inform them about threats resulting from their cooperation with terrorists (ex: local leaders encouraging women to marry foreign fighters who then settle down and perpetuate the cycle of violence).

- Poverty leads to humiliation for terrorists to exploit.
- Unemployment (including youth and returning combatants having fought in Libya).
- AQIM that attacks traditional institution and recruits by tying economic opportunity to its ideology.

#### Recommendations:

- Address terrorism as a criminal phenomenon.
- Engage men and women with religious authority to collaborate in delegitimizing those misusing religion for terrorism purposes.
- Provide religious training institutions to ensure proper education and interpretation of religion – must be based in Africa context.
- Eliminate attraction for terrorists to settle down by: a) establishing Government presence in remote areas; b) stimulating economic and social development; c) addressing grievances of the community; and d) establishing infrastructure (police office, medical facilities, general Government office).
- Engage and respect local and traditional leaders.
- Encourage and collaborate with indigenous forms of governance.
- Build confidence and establish local national pride (ex: ensuring basic needs are met).
- Recognizing each community is unique and requires a tailored approach.
- Invest portion of national revenues from foreign companies into social and economic development.
- Confidence building of population by creative Government CVE messaging (print and broadcast media, insert accompany the energy bills in the mail). A better informed population will be empowered to react and report any terrorist or criminal activity they may witness.

#### Comments:

- Given border communities are marginalized, have less access to Government services and little interaction with the central Government, engagement will be rewarding in the long term as grievances are addressed, trust is built and cooperation is established.

## **Panel V – Countering the Financing of Terrorism**

#### Presenters

- Mr. Christophe Compaore, Divisional Police Commissioner, Burkina Faso
- Mr. Ahmed Seif El-Dawla, Chief of Section, UN CTED and Mr. Franck Kasbarian, Expert, The Al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee (1267), UN – PLEASE NOTE there are two international speakers

Below is a summary of the presentations made by the panel speakers:

Challenges, such as a cash flow economy and lack of equipment, were described as some of the barriers to limiting the access of financial resources used by terrorists to conduct their activities. Training and equipment were the primary recommendations made.

### Presenters

- Mr. Christophe Compaore, Divisional Police Commissioner, Burkina Faso
- Mr. Ahmed Seif El-Dawla, Chief of Section, UN CTED and Mr. Franck Kasbarian, Expert, The Al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee (1267), UN – PLEASE NOTE there are two international speakers

### Threat and Gaps:

- Terrorists are quick to adapt to new tracking methods.
- Criminal activity is difficult to detect in a cash-based economy.
- Movement of criminals and terrorists across and within borders are difficult to detect.
- Gap exists between ratification and implementation of treaties.

### Recommendations:

- Detect and Prevent: Procurement of software and training for Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) staff.
- Recognize the negative consequences of ransom payments and enhance international efforts to deny terrorists the access to funding for their criminal activities.
- FIUs require coordination with Governments and stakeholders.
- Establishing central FIU.
- Create regulations to guide financial framework.
- Conduct risk assessments.

### Comments:

- New and existing anti money laundering legislation must be accompanied by trained and well equipped officials to detect, track and apprehend offenders.

## **Panel VI – Police Cooperation**

### Presenters

- Mr. Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Metaly, Senior Commissioner, Ministry of Interior Directorate for National Security, Mauritania
- Mr. Matthew Morin, Criminal Intelligence Analyst, Interpol

Below is a summary of the presentations made by the panel speakers:

Training should be customised to reflect the varying level of education and preparedness of each police force. Cooperation between Sahel police forces should be encouraged and facilitated as well as opportunity of sharing and learned best practices with existing organisations such as the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JLCC). Timely information sharing was a reoccurring recommendation. The importance of a developed legal framework was described as essential to allow law enforcement officials, such as police, to perform their duties.

### Threat and Gaps:

- Lack or no coordination between security services within and between countries (police, border, military and intelligence).
- Lack of trust and confidence to share information.
- Cross border crime and terrorism.

### Recommendations:

- Create legal frameworks between states to facilitate sharing and cooperation.
- Establish trust to allow for communication and information exchange amongst different agencies and organisations responsible for countering terrorism within and between borders.
- Information sharing: fusion of information must occur within each country and within the region to properly achieve full picture and situational awareness.
- Provide training and equipment.
- Need to institutionalize informal relationships.
- Make full use of existing legal infrastructure to combat terrorism.
- Encourage exchange of best practices (ex: information collection, investigations,
- Use existing regional mechanism (JCLCC and Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre-SELEC-) as model for regional cooperation.
- Extension of Interpol's I-24/7 network throughout the region.

### Comments:

- Morocco has offered training on crime scene management and to create a network of police liaison officers.

## **Conclusions**

### Common themes

- Ensure respect for human rights and rule of law.
- Countries of the Sahel must take ownership of their counter terrorism capacity building needs.
- Evident links between each topic; priority areas listed in SWG work plan are intertwined.
- Social and economic development along with poverty reduction will assist in combatting terrorism.
- Need for sustainable training and the equipment required for task completion.
- The issue of ransom payments along with the role it plays in financing was underlined.
- Concerns over porous borders, especially with regional instability (primarily weapons flow out of Libya).
- Legislation and training must be harmonized and rendered interoperable to ensure similar capabilities on all sides of the borders.

- The need for an Africa-wide arrest warrant was highlighted on several occasions. It was suggested that in the meantime, Interpol's Red Notice could be used.
- Possible pan African mutual legal assistance.
- Sustainable training (train the trainers, employee retention, training that can be built on and followed up).
- Terrorism in the Sahel is global, not regional.
- Counter terrorism methods should be proactive as the threat evolves,
- Growing links between regional terrorist organisations.
- Need for accurate and timely sharing of information and intelligence.

#### NEXT STEPS – Sahel working group

Following this first meeting, the intent is to encourage regional and extra regional countries to collaborate and host technical expert level meetings on each of the priority areas. To date the following meetings are tentatively planned:

- **Border Security:** In May 2012, the US and Niger will organise a Border Security workshop in Niamey, Niger. The goal is to assemble border security experts from within and outside the Sahel region.
- **Countering the Financing of Terrorism:** In late 2012, Switzerland will invite experts to an Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) seminar to examine best practices and procedures. This event will take place in a country of the Sahel.
- **Community Engagement:** Denmark will seek collaboration with a Sahel country towards strengthening Community Engagement.
- **Legislative and Judicial Cooperation:** Morocco offers to create a platform of judicial cooperation between countries of the Sahel region by hosting a consultation meeting of prosecutors to share lessons learned and best practices.
- **Police cooperation:** Morocco has offered training on crime scene management and to create a network of police liaison officers.