



## High Level Seminar

# Peace, Security and Sustainable Development

## The Role of African and European Parliaments in Tackling the Root Causes and Consequences of Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Brussels, Belgium | 8-9 October 2015

### Declaration

*This Declaration, adopted at the end of the High Level Seminar by all participants, puts forward our shared expectations and a series of recommendations that parliamentarians can pursue in their respective countries and regions to tackle the root causes and consequences of terrorism and violent extremism in order to support the attainment of peace, security and sustainable development.*

We, Parliamentarians and former Parliamentarians from Europe and Africa having participated in the High Level Seminar, “Peace, Security and Sustainable Development: The role of African and European Parliaments in tackling the Root Causes and Consequences of Violent Extremism and Terrorism,” hosted by AWEPA and the Belgian Senate in Brussels on 8-9 October 2015,

- 1. Endorsing** the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) announced by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and the global plan of action for ‘people, planet and prosperity,’ and recognising the historic achievement of SDG 16 to promote peaceful just, and inclusive societies;
- 2. Endorsing** the aspirations of African Agenda 2063 for a peaceful and secure Africa free from armed conflict, terrorism and extremism, and endorsing the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda that peace and security are essential for the achievement of the continent’s development aspirations;
- 3. Acknowledging** that peaceful, just and inclusive societies are based on equal access to justice, respect for human rights, rule of law and good governance, and the urgent need to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; acknowledging further the importance of SDG 5 to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls as without investing heavily in women and girls, peace and security will never be possible;



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- 4. *Emphasising*** that strong parliaments lie at the heart of Africa's long-term development as they serve as the arbiters of peace, stability and prosperity, while being mindful that in order to successfully achieve these goals we must bring parliaments closer to the people;
- 5. *Recognising*** the importance of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the efforts of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union to focus on early warning and conflict prevention, and recognising further the emphasis placed by the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States to address the root causes of conflict and fragility;
- 6. *Condemning*** categorically all forms and manifestations of terrorism, irrespective of their perpetrators or motives, as well as the advocacy, promotion or glorification of terrorism, and noting with concern the five-fold increase in the number of deaths caused globally by terrorism since 2000;
- 7. *Underlining*** the urgent need to counter terrorism by tackling foreign terrorist fighters (UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2178) and implementing the global UN Plan of Action (UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Resolution A/RES/60/288) while complying with our obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law (UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/66/171);
- 8. *Underlining*** Resolution 276 on Terrorist Acts in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights inviting all African States to take the necessary measures to combat terrorism particularly by initiating joint actions aimed at preventing all activities relating to the financing, sale and transfer of weapons to terrorist groups;
- 9. *Underlining*** further the Draft Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, and the European Parliament resolution on anti-terrorism measures (2015/2530(RSP)) calling for the European Union to more actively promote a global partnership against terrorism by working closely with regional actors such as the African Union and countries significantly impacted by conflict;
- 10. *Emphasising*** that to combat terrorism and violent extremism we must tackle the root causes through the promotion of inclusive societies and institutions, high-quality employment and education, reduced poverty and inequality, and equal access to opportunities and resources;
- 11. *Emphasising further*** the importance of dialogue, information sharing and cooperation between Europe and Africa, the importance of parliamentary exchanges for enhanced and mutually beneficial regulations and policies, and the unique role being played by AWEPA in strengthening cooperation between elected African parliamentarians and their European counterparts in attaining the MDGs;

We do hereby present the following **recommendations** with respect to tackling the root causes and consequences of terrorism and radical extremism in Africa:

## Recommendations

### ***I. To address the root causes of violent extremism and terrorism, parliamentarians must:***

- Promote a culture of tolerance, mutual respect, gender equality and human rights protection. Uphold these values at all times even when it might compromise short term electoral goals.
- Actively promote inclusive public institutions and equal access to public goods to ensure that no one is marginalised and that everyone has a stake in society.
- Invest in strengthening the technical capacity, including research facilities and organisational structure, of parliamentary institutions to ensure parliamentarians can effectively perform their functions. This may mean increasing parliamentary budget, hence enhanced political will and external support is needed for parliamentary strengthening.
- Work hard to give credibility to parliaments and ensure they are seen as high trust institutions as parliamentarians are the arm of the people and not the arm of government. Build effective, accountable and inclusive parliaments by being effective, accountable and inclusive parliamentarians.
- Advocate strongly and take action for a governance system (including constitution) and public institutions that reflect diversity in society including minority representation.
- Further contribute to building trust in public institutions by taking a strong stance against corruption.
- Actively engage in processes that promote social cohesion, nation building and national reconciliation. Deal with the impunity of the past and ensure there is no impunity in the future.
- Hold the executive accountable for the delivery of public services and the equitable distribution of resources. Marginalisation and radicalisation are often due to the lack of, or inequitable delivery of, public goods and services.
- Welcome and promote the active engagement of a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including civil society, the media and the private sector, in political discussions relating to terrorism and violent extremism, ensuring that the voices of the marginalised are heard and attention is paid to social media.
- When adopting legislation that tackles the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism ensure that it is evidence based and adapted to the specificities of the local context and history.

### ***II. To support the youth, parliamentarians must:***

- Promote laws, budgets and policies that reduce the potential risk factors for violent extremism, such as making education easily accessible, providing specific training and non-exploitative

employment projects for young people. Being viably employed beyond the informal sector is critical to preventing alienation, positively developing identity, building self-respect and avoiding the poverty trap.

- Advocate for the inclusion of youth and women in decision-making processes. For instance, by taking initiatives to stimulate the increased representation of youth and women in parliament, supporting the creation of a youth parliament or inviting national and regional youth councils to testify before committee hearings.
- Develop, monitor and sustain comprehensive programmes to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate child soldiers and young returnee combatants back into society.
- Work hand in hand with civil society organisations, in particular those organisations active in the field of youth education and those that voice the concerns of young people.

**III. *To address the consequences of violent extremism and terrorism, parliamentarians must:***

- Pressure the executive and judiciary to prosecute any person or organisation engaged in, or helping to finance or supply arms to, violent extremist or terrorist groups in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 2161 (2014) and 2170 (2014). Ensure domestic legislation is updated and takes into account these resolutions and that these actions do not lead to arbitrary arrests.
- Propose a resolution at the European Parliament and at the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly – in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) – to encourage all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict while guaranteeing their protection and full participation in successive peace processes.
- Make use of their oversight tools, for example parliamentary commissions of inquiry, to ensure governments comply with their obligations under international law, particularly international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, including in their counter-terrorism operations. This is important to avoid counter-terrorism operations being used as an excuse to violate civil liberties and human rights.
- Strengthen oversight by relevant parliamentary committees of military expenditure and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons at both the national and regional levels.
- Initiate parliamentary diplomacy to push government and politics towards a paradigm switch from military solutions to one focusing on dialogue. Parliamentarians need to speak to other parliamentarians, building networks within and across regions and throughout the world. Only with increased cooperation and constructive dialogue can parliaments deal effectively with violent extremism and terrorism.

- Engage in and seek support for parliamentary networks such as the Inter-Parliamentary Network on Peace and Security in West Africa, Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Parliamentary Forum for Democracy, and the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance for Human Rights and Global Peace.

**IV. To support forced migrants and refugees, parliamentarians must:**

- Ensure that human rights conventions are applied to all people, including migrants and refugees. This is in line with the Declaration accompanying the SDGs in which states commit to cooperate to ensure migration takes place ‘in the full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons.’
- Promote dialogue and cooperation between governments, parliaments and all stakeholders; focus on migration from the diplomacy and development cooperation angle, not only from the security angle.
- Explain to the public the difference between economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, contributing to diminishing confusion of ideas and policies. Explain to the public the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, including through engagement with the media and civil society.
- Promote the internationally accepted Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and ensure it is applied. Explain that everyone has the right to ask for asylum and hence building walls is not the answer.
- Promote a culture of tolerance and mutual respect; as a human being, if you feel welcome, you are much more willing to cooperate and integrate in society. Promote the integration of refugees into host societies, as resettlement and repatriation is usually not an option; this strategy is still the most successful and can become an opportunity for development.
- Promote legal ways of migration for forced migrants and asylum seekers, ensuring they are not forced to turn to human traffickers as a result of government policies. Tackle human trafficking and human traffickers.
- Promote reconciliation within host societies and countries of origin. Support interlinkages between the diaspora and communities of origin.
- Fight corruption in the management of temporary camps, forced migrants and refugees.
- Promote inclusive institutions including judicial authorities. Give asylum seekers the right of appeal when asylum is denied.
- Openly condemn all forms of xenophobia as it destroys the common values that bind us together.

## **Commitment**

We, Parliamentarians and former Parliamentarians from Europe and Africa commit to sharing this Declaration with our respective parliaments for debate. The Pan African Parliament and Africa's regional parliamentary institutions, together with AWEPA, play an important role in creating an open space for dialogue and trust. We pledge to work together to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved in all countries of the world by 2030 at the very latest. We request that AWEPA coordinate the follow up of these recommendations in cooperation with African parliaments. Strong parliaments are an antidote to violent extremism and terrorism.