

Final Report

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
October 8 – 9 2015

Opening Session

Hon. Christine Defraigne, President of the Belgian Senate, welcomed participants by stating that the seminar provided an opportunity to strengthen the interaction between African and Belgian friends of democracy. She highlighted that while fighting for sustainable development is not a new concept, the recent summit on the SDGs marked an important turning point as the international community finally acknowledges the importance of sustainable development in eradicating the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. Sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security, in turn at risk without sustainable development. She also held that in the fight against violence we need to focus not only on the social and economic well-being of African citizens but also on their political emancipation. The younger generation of Africans needs to learn the value of dialogue and peaceful solutions. Hon. Defraigne concluded with an excerpt from a poem that inspired Nelson Mandela, *“It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”*

Ms. Miet Smet, Minister of State and President of AWEPA, opened the seminar by declaring that we are living in a historic period of time. Over the course of the last 25 years, we have nearly reached our target of universal primary education. The goal of halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV has been met, and we have seen significant declines in global malarial deaths and mortality rates in children under five. Yet we have not yet reached all of our goals. Many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, especially fragile and conflict-affected states, are lagging behind and have underperformed on the MDGs. The theme of the seminar: “Peace, Security and Sustainable Development” is thus of particular priority for Africa’s development. It echoes the African Union ‘Common African Position on Agenda 2030’ underlining the importance of peace and security in Africa and in the world, and the inextricable links between development and peace, security and stability. She highlighted that *our ability to achieve peaceful and secure societies is intrinsically connected to the strength of our democratic institutions* and that regional parliamentary bodies have a key role to play in reinforcing regional cooperation and building trust between states, particularly around sensitive political areas like terrorism. Ms. Smet concluded by urging

participants to take the time to discuss in depth and formulate recommendations that can contribute to peace, security and sustainable development.

In his Framing Remarks, the **Rt. Hon. Ike Ekweremadu**, Speaker of the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), noted that peace, security, and sustainable development are like three peas in a pod: they are inseparable. Therefore, it is only logical to state that the entrenchment of peace and security are natural precursors to any meaningful development. He reminded participants of the significant costs associated with terrorism and insurgency in parts of West Africa, particularly as a result of Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria, including lives and livelihoods lost, development projects abandoned, schools shut, commercial activities paralysed, farmland abandoned, families dislocated and towns destroyed. Hon. Ekweremadu stated that *“I have always held that the insecurity of a part affects the security of the whole...the forces of terrorism, insurgence, and other forms of violent extremism are not only transnational in nature, but also trigger chains of repercussions that defy national borders.”* He concluded by challenging parliamentarians to stand up and be counted on in the global effort to address the root causes of violent extremism and their consequences by using the traditional powers of a parliament to wage war against global insecurity.

Keynote Speech

The keynote speech was given **Ambassador Macharia Kamau**, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations and Co-Chair of the United Nations General Assembly Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals. He began his presentation by noting that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 SDGs and 169 targets at its core, focuses on the interplay between people, planet, and the pursuit of prosperity. While this idea is not new, the global agreement as ‘One World’ to implement one paradigm for development is. The SDGs constitute a fundamental paradigm shift in the way in which international cooperation, domestic governance and development will be pursued in the future. This means that legislators will need to reassess what it means to be a democracy, a society and even an economy. The SDGs demand a much larger menu of responses that reflect the totality of the challenges we face today. Goal 5 on gender equality is unprecedented and critical as we will not achieve the SDGs if we do not achieve gender equality. Yet all the goals are important and policy makers must not, and cannot, pick and choose. Rather, sustainable development demands a universal and comprehensive approach to development.

Ambassador Kamau went on to examine the recent sharp rise in violent extremism and terrorism, arguing that it cannot be seen and dealt with in isolation. Equally, headlines should not drive our thinking, politics and legislative action. For example, it is important to understand that poverty is not a direct contributor. Poor people are not more likely to resort to acts of terror than other social groups. Rather, inequality in the context of poverty is the real trigger and contributor to extremism, violence and terror, particularly when you inject the narrative of marginalization and victimization. When religious or ideological constructs are added the mix can become incendiary, highly toxic and destructively dangerous. He concluded by noting that:

“Legislators are the representatives of the People, the very people who will perpetrate acts of extreme violence and terrorism, the very people who are caught up in war and acts that undermine peaceful societies and stable institutions. Legislators need to act as leaders and as guides for people. Leaders who understand that we need global legislatures that think for their communities but also beyond them. Leaders who legislate as if peace matters, as if the planet matters. Leaders who want to secure the peace, to secure the planet and to secure us all within that planet.”

Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), provided the response to Ambassador Kamau’s speech. He noted that the IPU has been a privileged partner in the process leading towards the SDG summit. The IPU focused on ensuring that a governance goal was included among the SDGs. He agreed with Ambassador Kamau that the success of the SDGs will depend on our ability to reduce inequality within and between countries. Parliaments must be the partners of the SDGs, and they must adopt the legislation, approve the budgets and hold governments to account to reach these goals. As regards terrorism and violent extremism, Mr. Chungong argued that the institutions of government must regain the trust of the people and reduce exclusion by building inclusive governments. *Parliaments must reflect the composition of society, be a ‘microcosm,’ ensuring that everyone in the country can somehow identify themselves in the parliament.*

Session I: The Root Causes of Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Session I provided participants with analyses of the root causes of violent extremism and terrorism in Africa and Europe. Both presenters stressed the importance of building an inclusive society where young people feel they have a future while emphasising that policymakers must refrain from assuming that what works in one country will work in another.

Dr. Anneli Botha, Senior Researcher in the Terrorism, Transnational Threats and International Crime Division at the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa, provided an analysis of the root causes of violent extremism and terrorism in Africa based on empirical research with radical groups such as Al-Shabaab. She argued that understanding why people become radicalised is complex and requires examining both the external circumstances as well as a person’s individual psychology, as similar external circumstances lead some people to become radicalised and others not. Moreover, only some of those who become radicalised join a violent organisation and carry out terrorist acts.

Dr. Botha’s interviews with members of violent organizations revealed that it was not poverty but rather relative deprivation that was a key root cause of radicalization. Members perceived themselves as marginalized, second-class citizens, with unequal access to public goods as a result of belonging to a religious or ethnic minority. They felt a complete disconnect and lack of trust in those in power, seeing their religion as under threat from the government. The behaviour of security forces, including arbitrary arrests based on profiling and extrajudicial killings, were seen

as a contributing factors to radicalisation. Dr. Botha argued that education is a key solution as it empowers individuals to think critically and express themselves politically while improving life opportunities. The state needs to build an inclusive national identity as the way the state respond to terrorism is probably the most important factor driving marginalization & radicalization. Parliamentarians must look for tailor-made solutions and avoid playing up religious and ethnic differences at election time.

Prof. Rik Coolsaet, Professor of International Relations at Ghent University in Belgium, offered participants three key points to understanding radicalisation in Europe. The first is that the concept of ‘radicalisation’ and the discussion of ‘root causes’ is only 11 years old. After 9/11 many felt that such a discussion condoned terrorism. Today we realise that without examining the root causes we cannot tackle terrorism. The second is that when we examine why an individual becomes radicalized we have to look for answers beyond the individual and their immediate family and friends, towards the wider context and the enabling environment. In Europe, radicalisation has become dangerously entwined with islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. This means that if a Muslim commits a violent act it is terrorism however if a non-Muslim commits a violent act it is insanity.

Only a few years ago it was the extreme left that were the ‘terrorists’ in Europe hence the current wave of terrorism is not about Islam as a religion. Third, programs focusing on countering radicalisation by emphasising a moderate version of Islam do not work as it is not about the ideology nor the narrative. The young men and women leaving for Syria are often not fundamentalists nor radicals: their political knowledge is shallow. Rather they feel they have no stake in society and no future while the Islamic State offers them an immediate answer to these grievances. Prof Coolsaet proffered that whether in Africa or Europe the solution to violent extremism and terrorism is building an inclusive society, overcoming the ‘us versus them’ mentality.

Session II: Panel Debate on the Consequences of Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Session II included a panel debate on the consequences of violent extremism and terrorism. The four panellists reminded parliamentarians of the threat posed by government actions that undermine the norms underpinning democratic societies including human rights, as well as the particular vulnerability of women and girls.

Mr. Yves Leterme, former Prime Minister of Belgium and the Secretary General of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), argued that violent extremism and terrorism constitute a series threat to democratic governance. It can undermine the fundamental norms that underpin democratic societies as citizens may lose confidence in the state if it fails to adequately address terrorism or provides a disproportionate response. International IDEA is supporting democratic processes around the world and reducing opportunities for the emergence of conflict and violence through for example it’s Electoral Risk

Management Tool. Violence stands against inclusiveness and inclusive dialogue is key to peacebuilding and preventive action.

The **Rt. Hon. Ike Ekweremadu**, Speaker of the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), elaborated on the effects of terrorism and violent extremism on the economic, social and political lives of West Africans. The costs include everything from the destruction of property to elevated defence budgets. Thousands have been forced to flee their homes, migrating even at the risk of their own lives. *The first casualty of terrorism is often human rights as governments feel they need to make what is in effect a false choice between security and civil liberties rather than finding a healthy balance.* Violent extremism also has a tremendous impact on school closures, disruption of academic calendars and school dropout rates. There are over 1.4 million children displaced due to insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria. He concluded by noting that a determined world working in synergy can overcome terrorism and ameliorate its consequences.

Hon. Estelle Flore Angangou, President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of Central Africa (RFPAC) of AWEPA and Member of Parliament from Gabon, noted that dealing with terrorism is a relatively new phenomenon for African governments. She emphasised the disproportionate impact of terrorism and conflict on women and girls, including the impact of the absence of male family members who have gone into combat, been killed or disappeared. Some women feel forced to stay in their homes despite high insecurity, hoping they will be spared only to find that they are the most vulnerable to attacks, intimidation, reprisals and sexual violence. Other consequences include loss of education, trauma and the psychological impact of choices made. Hon. Angangou concluded by arguing that *states must promote and respect international laws that protect women and children from all forms of violence during conflict and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.*

Ms. Magda de Meyer, Head of the Belgian AWEPA Section and former Member of Parliament in Belgium, emphasised that gender inequality and discrimination of women and girls is key to understanding why women and girls are often the first victims of violent extremism and terrorism. Not only non-state-actors but also states use arguments based on religion, culture and tradition to justify violence and discrimination against women and girls. States facilitate terrorism by failing to protect women or girls against crimes, installing a system of impunity and not offering legal protection to victims. Parliamentarians need to lobby against such impunity. Investing in gender equality, equal rights and the empowerment of women's organisations is absolutely necessary to fight violent extremism in the long run. *“Without empowered women there will be no peace. There will be no peace without development. There will be no development without women. There will be no peace without women. Women power is peace power.”*

Working Group 1: Tackling the Root Causes of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Mr. Fulco van Deventer, Deputy Director of the Human Security Collective (HSC), provided the Framing Remarks in this Working Group. He noted that in dealing with violent extremism, there

has been a shift from a hard security to a soft approach. This includes reaching out to communities, involving all sectors of government, engaging with different identity groups, stimulating inter-religious dialogue and promoting tolerance. He stressed the importance of putting human security and fundamental freedoms at the centre of government initiatives. We need to differentiate between triggers (influx of arms, elections...), accelerators (geographic or demographic conditions) and root causes (bad governance, corruption, inequality...). We also need to be aware of both push and pull factors at the local level and international level. He concluded that that *while there are clear regional and global connections between extremist groups there are always specific national and sub-national dimensions.*

Some of the key recommendations to emerge from the discussion in the Working Group included to initiate and adopt laws to fight terrorism that take into account the different contexts and historical aspects of each country; to open up the political space in order for civil society to be included in the political processes of tackling terrorism and violent extremism; to fight against corruption and strengthen parliamentary oversight of funds used for weapons.

Working Group 2: Tackling the Root Causes of Terrorism and Violent Extremism: A Focus on Youth Education and Youth Unemployment

Hon. **Prosper Higiro**, Secretary General of the Forum of Parliaments of Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region opened the discussion by noting that around 70% of Africa's population is under 30 years of age and will double in the next 15 years. A large portion of young people is unemployed or underemployed, often in the informal sector with little support from the government. Youth become vulnerable to radicalisation due to factors including illiteracy, frustrations at long-lasting conflict, poor governance, widespread corruption, electoral violence, inequality and unequal sharing of national resources. Moreover, politicians do not fulfil promises made to young people during elections, leaving them with the idea that solutions can only be found outside the political mainstream. Parliamentarians must reform the education sector by making it more relevant for jobs for youth, increase youth political involvement, create access for financing for young people, fund youth ministries with clear mandates and improve anti-corruption mechanisms.

A second set of Framing Remarks were provided by **Mr. Sering Falu Njie**, the Deputy Director for the UN Millennium Campaign. He pointed out that terrorism and violent extremism must be looked at within the broader context of global peace and security with particular emphasis on root causes. Democratic space, governance, inclusion/marginalisation, voice and participation and capacities of national institutions are key determinants. He reminded participants that 45% of the global youth labour force are either not working or working poor. Development planning needs to recognise the critical issue of youth in order to harness the demographic dividend. 65% of the population are under 35 yet there is little attention to youth issues in national development plans. Youth ministries are often under-funded and lack coherent development plans. Job creation must be prioritised with education and training tailored towards the labour market.

Young people must be part of decision-making processes if they are to have hope for a better future. Otherwise, others will capitalise on their hopelessness.

Key recommendations to emerge from the discussion in this Working Group included that parliamentarians should advocate for the inclusion of youth in decision-making processes, for instance by creating a quota of elected MPs based on age and gender or by creating youth parliaments; promote international discussion forums on youth related issues and work hand in hand with NGOs working in the field of youth education.

Working Group 3: Tackling the Consequences of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Dr. Kabeer Garba, Bureau Manager of the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stressed that parliamentarians need to play a more active role in fighting terrorism. For example, many states still lack proper legislation to prosecute terrorists. Parliamentarians need to create budgets that reduce inequality and use their powers of oversight to ensure that budgets are actually implemented as planned. Furthermore, parliamentarians must avoid using religious and ethnic divisions in society to create violent groups. For example, Boko Haram started as a group of political thugs supported by a Nigerian governor that then broke away once there was disagreement with the senator. Parliamentarians need to minimise levels of desperation of parliamentarians to stay in power while accepting that being a parliamentarian is not a career.

Mr. Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) reminded participants that *we should be careful with terminology as even Nelson Mandela was considered a terrorist at one point*. By focusing on the means, the West supports kleptocratic and despotic governments who use terrorism as a means to military support in the same way that communism was used during the cold war. Military solutions to terrorism lead to further exclusion of some groups which in turn may lead to secessionist movements. We need a paradigm switch from military to dialogue based. Parliamentarians must ensure their constitution is inclusive and accommodates minorities. They need to actively engage in a project of social cohesion, nation building, national reconciliation, and transitional justice and hold the executive to account on delivering public goods and services.

Following discussion among participants in the Working Group, key recommendations included that Parliamentary Committees must hold the executive accountable for the delivery of public services and equitable distribution of resources; (re) framing constitutions to be more inclusive and reflect diversity in society; and actively engage in a project of social cohesion, nation-building and national reconciliation.

Working Group 4: Tackling the Consequences of Terrorism and Violent Extremism: A focus on migration

Hon. Kerstin Lundgren, Member of Swedish Parliament, Political Coordinator and Vice-President of the Executive Committee of AWEPA questioned how we define terrorism. The term has been used throughout history to define everything from French revolutionaries to those today opposed to the Assad regime in Syria. The impact of terrorism on migration is significant, both in terms of high numbers of internally displaced and refugees. She urged participants to reaffirm that *human rights are universal and apply to all, including migrants*. She highlighted that if as a human being you feel welcome then you are more willing to cooperate and integrate into society. If you are treated like a second class citizen then integration is less likely.

Mr. Volker Hauck, Head of the Programme on Conflict, Security and Resilience at the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) argued that the discussion should not just be about migrants, but also about refugees. Worldwide displacement is at its highest rate ever. 86% of refugees find refuge in developing countries and only a fraction of these can be re-settled or repatriated to their countries of origin due to protracted or recurrent conflicts. The only realistic solution is the integration-path. Adequate integration policies can ensure that while host countries experience pressures in the short term, they can become positive in the medium to long term. Research and knowledge networking can help to question and counter existing positions, views and prejudices. For example, the extent to which migration is voluntary is actually a grey zone as *many 'economic migrants' are actually 'survival migrants' who fall outside the legal definition of a refugee yet are fleeing due to climate change, the threat of conflict or fragile states*. Parliamentarians should emphasise that migration is also an opportunity, set up effective institutions that deal with the diaspora and support remittance senders and receivers.

Following discussion among participants in the Working Group key recommendations included that parliamentarians should promote dialogue and cooperation between governments, parliaments and all stakeholders with a focus on migration from the diplomacy and development cooperation angle and not only from the security angle; Promote inclusive societies, including inclusive justice authorities; Openly condemn all forms of xenophobia that destroy to common values that hold us together.

Session IV: Joint EU-AU Partnership to tackle Terrorism

In Session IV participants were treated to presentations by both the European Union, and the African Union, special representatives on terrorism. Both emphasised the importance of going beyond a military response towards a focus on preventing terrorism and countering violent extremism.

H.E. Ambassador Francisco Madeira, African Union Special Representative for Counter-terrorism Cooperation and Director for the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) reminding the audience that it would take time before we 'win' over terrorism; radicalisation is still growing and strengthening on the African continent. Terrorism has evolved, with radical groups espousing similar political objectives, driven by local agendas but connected to the global

agenda. Moreover, the arrival of the Islamic state and foreign fighters to the Sahel has reduced the influence of Al-Qaeda while creating confrontations between various groups, further complicating matters.

Terrorist groups exploit the weaknesses of governments and those who are dissatisfied with the state. In the Sahel region, the non-existent state in Libya and Mali are at the epicentre. Yet they need funds, arms, recruits, places to hide, operational intelligence and the ability to move undetected. Terrorism can be fought at three stages. First at the stage of recruitment and second in terms of access to funds, arms and logistic supplies. These stages are both non-military and the most effective. They involve addressing the multiple underlying social factors that lead to violent radicalisation. It also means creating strong partnerships between African governments and parliaments, community leaders, religious leaders, military leaders, intellectuals and civil society. Only the third stage has a military response. The EU is involved in counter-terrorism initiatives in Africa and need to reinforce coordination through the African Peace facility.

The **Mr. Gilles de Kerchove**, European Union Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, presented the audience with a snapshot of the challenges facing the EU, observing that the Paris 2015 terrorist attacks changed the level of ambition of the EU, particularly on counter-terrorism. First, the classic response of European governments has generally been to focus on security. This includes focusing on the 5000 European foreign fighters, legal and criminal definitions and handling their return to Europe. Second, there has been a steep learning curve over the last 5 years on how to counter violent extremism and prevent terrorism. States have learned that young people can become radicalised within the span of only a few days, prisons are a hotspot for radicalisation and counter-narratives are important. As a response, the EU set up the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) to help identify early signs of radicalisation.

Third, *the EU has acknowledged it needs to engage more actively with the Middle East and North African region through counter-terrorism initiatives and by integrating the EU development and security agenda and policies.* Fourth, there are growing links between terrorism and organised crime. Parliamentarians can fight terrorism by designing good laws, ensuring the security services are not too strong and abuse their powers and by ensuring the fight against terrorism is mainstreamed across all departments of government and that the state has a vision of how they can prevent terrorism.

Session V: Closing Ceremony

H.E. Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Belgium, led the closing ceremony by stating that Belgium has always prioritised Africa, especially central Africa, in terms of development cooperation and diplomatic focus. The Minister applauded the work of AWEPA as it facilitates contact between African countries during difficult times, such as when AWEPA supported parliamentary fora to renew contacts between Rwandan and Congolese MPs during a recent crisis. Belgium agrees with AWEPA that there can be no development without stability and no stability without democracy. Recent events in Burundi

demonstrate this. When the rule of law and respect for human rights are not observed, a country and region can easily become destabilised. The Minister also stated that he was convinced that prevention is the best way to fight violent extremism. He argued that the root causes of violent extremism include the breakdown of societies, local conflicts as well as social, economic, ethnic and political tensions.

To fight terrorism we need to acknowledge the decisive role played by women in the prevention of extremism and ensure that people have economic and social opportunities. It also means working at the municipal level with communities and families. Education is key in promoting tolerance, while citizenship and diversity must be fully reflected in school curricula. The Minister concluded that the implementation of the sustainable development framework requires everyone's full commitment. The focus must be on education and passing messages on our values to the younger generation while ensuring these messages are not compromised by our actions. Dialogue is key.

Hon. Agnes Mundia Limbo, Chair of the Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Human Rights at the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) stated that participants had learned during the conference that violent extremism and terrorism have no borders while inclusive states and governance structures and systems are key. The conference had exposed MPs to new knowledge on a very complex issue, challenging assumptions and stereotypes. She went on to call for more engagement and dialogue oriented solutions at all levels of governance, and to *ensure that women, young people and minority groups are fairly represented in parliament*. She concluded by noting that parliamentarians have a crucial role to play in implementing the post-2015 development agenda and this starts by finding ways to align the SDG targets with national and regional development plans.

Hon. Sabine de Bethune, Belgian Senator, concluded the conference by thanking participants on behalf of the Belgian Senate and urged everyone to take action on the conference Declaration and to follow up on the fruitful discussions.