



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

The UN Head of Counter-Terrorism concludes his first visit to the Sahel region - Mali and Mauritania

New York, 6 December 2017 – Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the Head of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, concluded his first mission to Mali and Mauritania. During the visit, Mr. Voronkov met with government officials, civil society, women’s groups, the diplomatic community, the G5 Sahel Secretariat and the UN System to explore how the Office of Counter-Terrorism can do more to support the counter-terrorism efforts of the countries in the region and provide effective capacity-building assistance to address the scourge of terrorism.

The Sahel region has become a priority area of the Office. In recent years, the region has been at the epicentre of terrorist activities and violent extremism, resulting in heavy loss of life, property and loss of state authority, and affecting the very foundations of social and economic development and peace of the countries in this region. Expressing his deep appreciation to the efforts undertaken by the Government of Mali and the people and security forces of Mali to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism, Under-Secretary-General Voronkov listened to officials and held consultations on how to move to the next phase of partnership with the region.

“The mandate of the Office of Counter-Terrorism is to ensure coordination and coherence in the activities undertaken to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We provide an ‘all-of-UN’ capacity-building approach through the Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism (I-ACT) Initiative in order to support the efforts of the Government and regional organizations in this area,” Mr. Voronkov said.

During meetings with Government officials in Bamako, Mali, Mr. Voronkov welcomed the development of the Counter-Terrorism National Policy and Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which are currently under revision by the Cabinet. He commended the balanced approach adopted in both documents to issues of gender, human rights, rule of law and victims. “The Plan of Action is ambitious and far-reaching and raises many hopes,” he said. “With the support of the international community, Mali is making substantial efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. The United Nations stands ready to further support these efforts,” Mr. Voronkov added.

During his visit, the Under-Secretary-General met UN entities to strengthen coordination and cooperation on the ground, including UNESCO with which discussions focused on countering the financing of terrorism through trafficking of cultural goods. He also met with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to discuss the current challenges to peace consolidation and paid tribute to the many peacekeepers who have lost their lives.

In Timbuktu, Mr. Voronkov delivered a speech highlighting the need for accountability for terrorism crimes, including the destruction of cultural heritage. He also met with local authorities, victims of violent extremism, and MINUSMA staff and expressed support for the victims.

In Nouakchott, Mauritania, Mr. Voronkov met with the Mauritanian authorities and representatives of the G5 Sahel Secretariat. He discussed the implementation of nine projects to support counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism in the region, which address the areas of education, mainstreaming gender in criminal justice, supporting women's role in security sector reform, improving investigative capacities, rehabilitation of former offenders, border stability and supporting regional efforts of G5 Sahel countries.

“We need a strong partnership that brings together all stakeholders to prevent our communities from sinking into extremism and radicalization. We all have a role to play. The United Nations remains committed to responding to this challenge and will move with G5 countries to help build a region where hope, peace and inclusion can prevail,” concluded Mr. Voronkov.

What is I-ACT

The I-ACT initiative is a strategic tool to support requesting governments and regional organisations in their implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy at the national and regional level in a coordinated and coherent manner. I-ACT promotes an “All-of-UN” approach to Counter Terrorism (CT) and Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) capacity building aimed at ensuring that the UN system delivers as one. It is a partnership tool between the UN and a requesting Member State or regional organization to help address the multiple dimensions of CT and PVE, while avoiding duplication of efforts. I-ACT is being implemented in Mali and in the G5 Sahel countries.

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