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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1040TH VIRTUAL MINISTERIAL MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
22 OCTOBER 2021

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PSC/PR/RPT.1034 (2021)

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REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON CONTINENTAL EFFORTS IN THE PREVENTION AND COMBATING OF TERRORISM IN AFRICA

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I.   INTRODUCTION

1.   Terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to national and continental security and stability. Terrorism is real and it intends to remain in the security landscape for years to come. Groups such as Boko Haram, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), supported by foreign terrorist fighters from other parts of the world, have undeniably stepped-up attacks in their zones of operations and are expanding both in magnitude and geographically, while terrorists affiliated to the so-called Islamic State (IS), Ahlu Sunnah Wa Jumma (ASWJ), also claimed new territory in Mozambique. Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) have also continued their deadly attacks against civilians and defence and security force in Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Expanding cooperation beyond our individual zones of operations becomes a pre-condition of success against terrorism and violent extremism threats.

2.   The geography of terrorism and insurgency in Africa has indeed seen a dramatic changed over the past decade. The threat assumed greater proportions. Regions that previously did not perceive the seriousness of the threat, or were considered to be immune from terrorism, have been targeted by terrorists. It has spread from North and East Africa to Western and Central Africa covering the Sahel, which expands from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, and more recently has expanded its tentacles to the South African Region, whereby the Central African Region has become the bridge that connects the Sahel and North Africa regions to the East and Southern Africa regions.

3.   The present report, submitted to facilitate the deliberations of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), provides an overview of the terrorism threat and vulnerability in Africa, as well as an update on AU's efforts to address this scourge, including through the elaboration of a normative framework and the establishment of the required institutional capacity. The report concludes with recommendations on the way forward.

II.   REGIONAL OVERVIEW

4.   Al Qaida and Daesh (the so-called Islamic State) affiliated groups remain the dominant terrorist and violent extremist groups operating in the Continent. These groups pursue an international terrorism agenda but seek opportunistic alliances with domestic terrorist and armed groups when convenient in order to entrench their dominance.

5.   These groups tend to hold territory from which they launch and sustain asymmetric warfare operations on security forces and local communities perceived to be unbelievers or supporters of the Government. In essence, these groups profess the rejection of secular governance and consider the spread of their belief in an extremist religious way of life as divine justification for the use of any means including violence to achieve their goal.

6.   Terrorist groups have increasingly employed sophisticated tactics in recent months whereby they attacked military bases and outposts and dominated villages. They also master the use of technology such as the use of drones to film their attacks and the use of such weapons as

==surface-to-air missiles. It is only a question of time before these groups adopt weaponized-drones into their Modus Operandi==. They are destroying infrastructure, assassinating community leaders and raiding security installations in coordinated strikes.

7.   In addition to using Non-Governmental Organizations as a cover, training and deployment of radical religious clerics, closure of existing schools and the establishment of Madrasas that teach extremist doctrine has become a primary scheme by which they seek to entrench themselves in local communities.

8.   ==These groups are not only espousing local grievances, for recruitment purposes and to gain the support of local communities, but are also ensuring that their leadership reflects local communities' ethnicities. They are occupying both the physical space, as well as the cyberspace. Their online propaganda levels have increased, as well as the quality of the media outputs, expanding by that their zones of operations and their zones of influence.==

9.   As a means of winning the support of the local communities in the areas under their control, terrorist groups do not only instill fear but seek to erode the trust between Governments and their populations by providing facilities and utilities that the authorities fail to deliver. Exploiting crisis such as the COVID-19 Pandemic to win the hearts and minds of populations, by providing basic services to communities, filling the humanitarian vacuum left by the humanitarian actors on the ground, acting, as a result, as a de-facto authority and building by that popular support for their cause and Proto state.
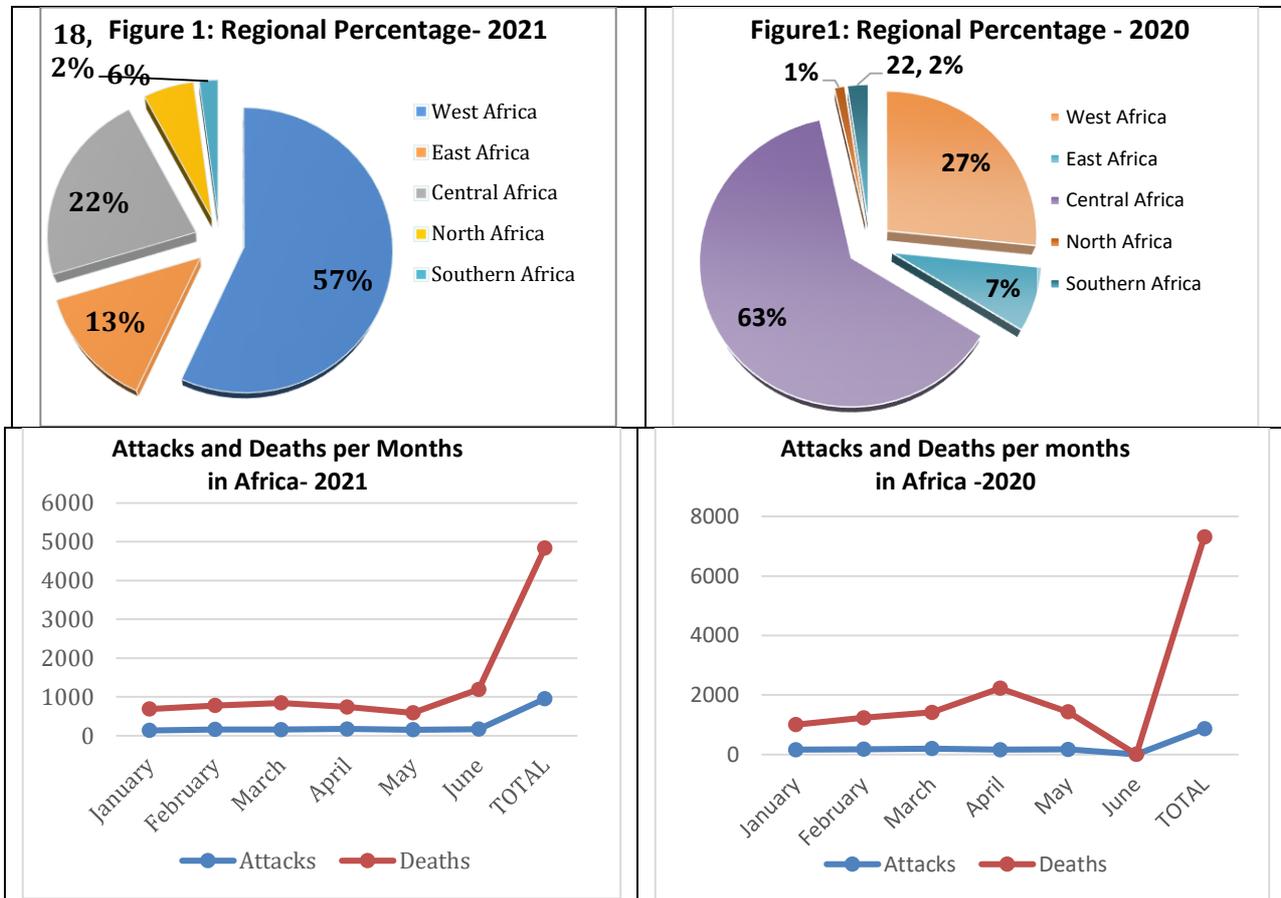
10.   While terrorist groups are known to receive external support from groups and governments with a similar religious world view, they also run criminal economies in a symbiotic relationship with Transnational Organized Crime groups in order to sustain their operations and control the national territories that they hold. Kidnap-for-Ransom (KFR) is in the increase along with Illegal exploitation of natural resources including livestock trafficking, in addition to drug trafficking.

11.   At the operational level, in addition to the use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the reliance on the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and suicide bombs particularly Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) and Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (PBIEDs) to cause massive casualties has become particularly devastating.

12.   ==Counter-Terrorism efforts have thus far neither been able to degrade the will, cohesion and capacity of these groups to launch debilitating attacks on both security forces and civilian communities, halt the aggressive spread of their extremist religious world view nor dislodge them from dominating the territories that they hold==.

13.   Indeed, as the world's attention turns almost completely to the COVID-19 pandemic, the battle against terrorism in Africa has taken one of its deadliest turns yet. Reports on terrorist activity across the globe in general and in Africa in particular have indeed highlighted heightened efforts by extremist groups to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to advance their agendas, consolidate their positions, entrench their roots into communities, extend their tentacles, and attract new members to expand their support base and strengthen their ranks.

14.   According to the ACSRT data, from 1 January to 30 June 2021, the Continent recorded a total of 950 terrorist attacks resulting in 3,883 deaths1, in comparison with the same period in 20202, where 867 terrorist attacks and 4,558 deaths were recorded; representing a 10% increase in the number of attacks and 15% decline in terrorism related deaths. This demonstrates that terrorist did not lose any of their operational capabilities, even more, this shows that their degree of lethality has increased.
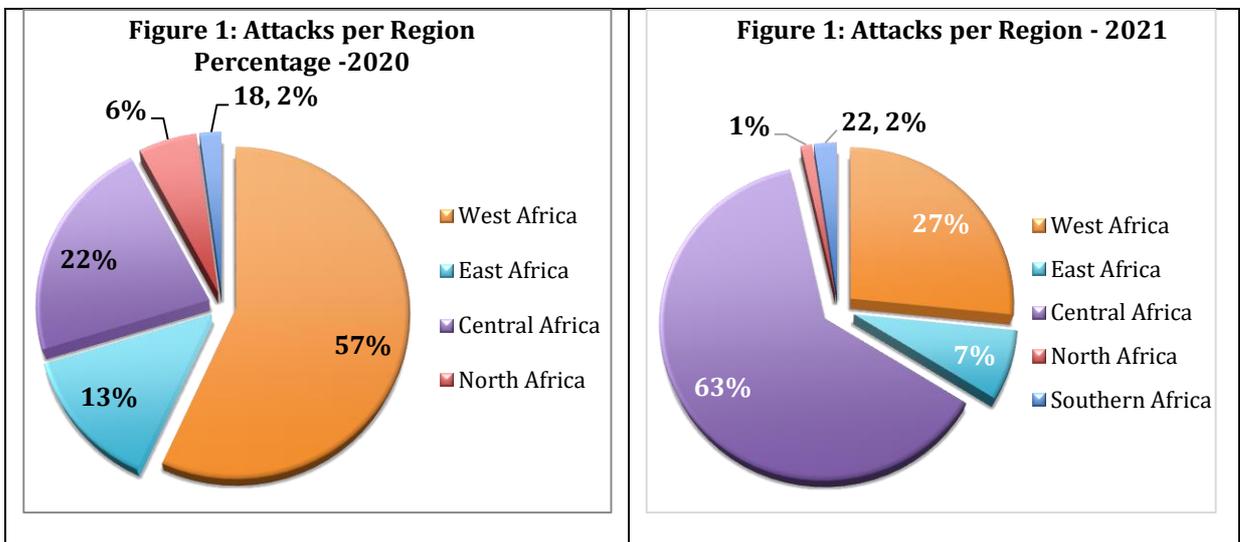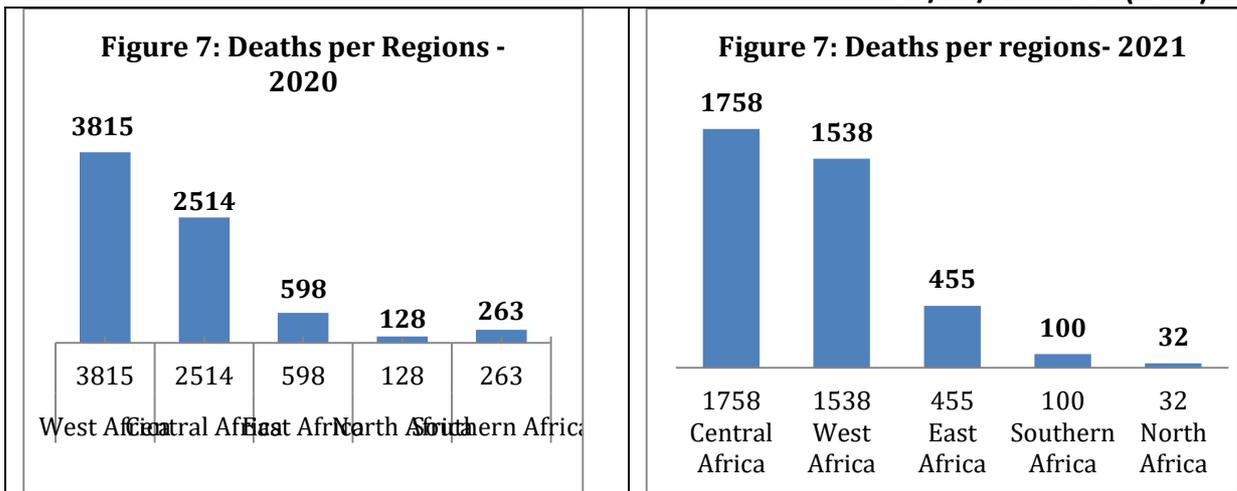

Figure 1: Regional Percentage- 2021

Figure1: Regional Percentage - 2020

Attacks and Deaths per Months in Africa- 2021

Attacks and Deaths per months in Africa -2020

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[1] Out of the recorded number of terrorist attacks, 530 were attacks were against civilian targets, 366 against military/security establishments, 40 were against International Organizations while 14 attacks targeted Government Institutions. Of the 3,883 encountered deaths, 2,281 were civilians, 724 Military/security personnel, while 878 were terrorists. In addition, deliberate counter terrorism operations across the continent eliminated a total of 1,943 terrorists.

[2] There were 500 attacks against civilian targets, 322 against military/security establishments, 24International Organizations while 21 attacks targeted against Government Institutions. Civilians constituted the highest number of casualties at 2,538, followed by military/security personnel with 1,078 deaths while 942 terrorists were killed in the first half of 2020 - both patterns for attacks and deaths category continued the same into 2021.

Figure 13: Five most Affected Countries - 2020
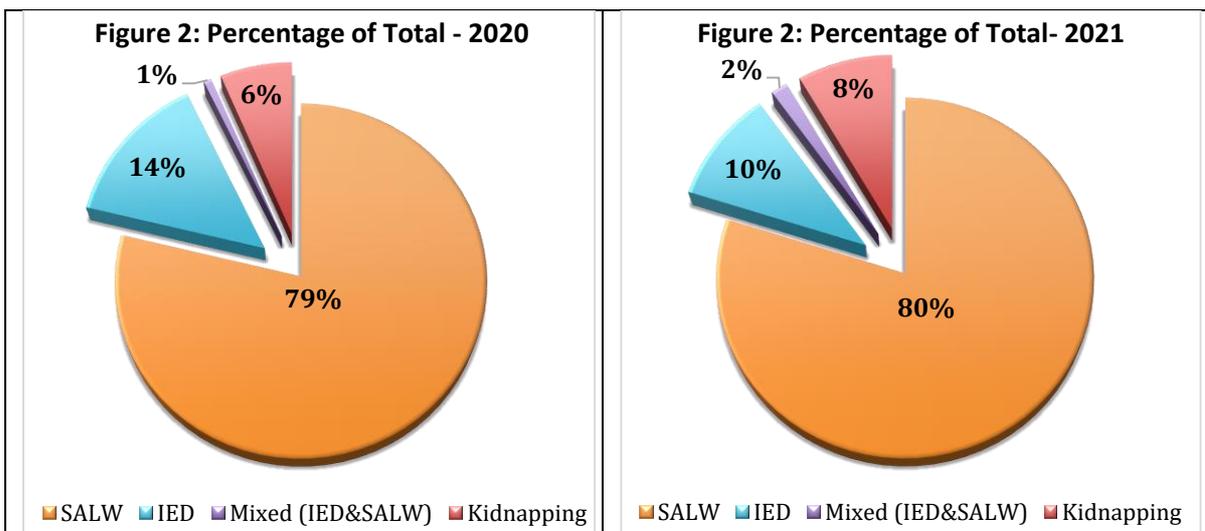

Figure 13: Five most Affected Countries-2021
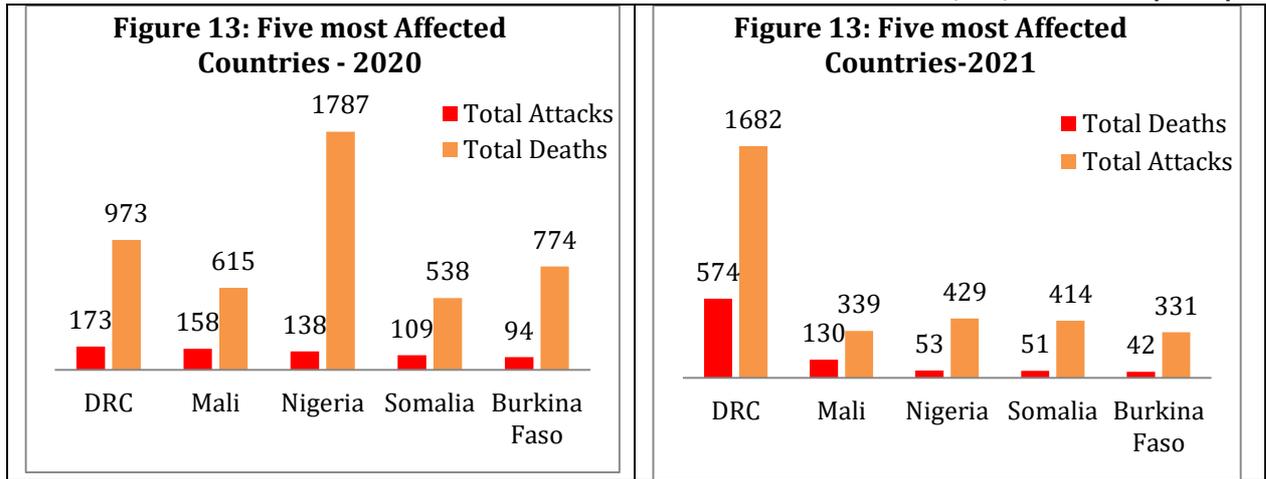
15.   **Most Affected Regions.** During the first half of 2021 the highest number of attacks per region was recorded in Central Africa with 595 attacks that led to 1,758 deaths, representing 45% of the total deaths recorded across the continent. All the attacks were recorded in the DRC. West Africa followed with 253 attacks resulting in 1,538 (39%), East Africa registered 69 attacks and 455 deaths (12%), Southern Africa had 22 attacks and 100 (3%) deaths while North Africa recorded the least in both number of attacks and deaths at 11 attacks and 32 deaths representing only a percentage of all the deaths. In contrast, in the first half of 2020, West Africa recorded the highest number of attacks at 452 (52%) attacks and significantly very high number of deaths at 2,517 (55,2%) while Central Africa was second hit region with 217 (25%) attacks and 1,323 (29%). East Africa recorded 149 (17%) attacks and 413 (9,1%) while the least number of attacks (3%) were recorded in Southern and North Africa at 28 and 21 attacks respectively. The two regions also registered 240 (5,3%) and 65 (1,4%) deaths respectively.

Figure 1: Attacks per Region Percentage -2020

Figure 1: Attacks per Region - 2021

Figure 7: Deaths per Regions - 2020

3815	2514	598	128	263
West Africa	Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa

Figure 7: Deaths per regions- 2021

1758	1538	455	100	32
Central Africa	West Africa	East Africa	Southern Africa	North Africa

16.   **Types of Attack.** Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) were the most used means of attack during the period under review, SALWs accounted for 80% of the total attacks, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) accounted for 10%, Kidnapping was 8% while Mixed Attacks (SALWs/IEDs/Kidnapping) was 2% of the attacks. In comparison to the previous 2020 similar period, the pattern has slightly changed; SALWs, IEDs, Kidnapping and Mixed Attacks, accounted for 79%, 14% 6% and 1% respectfully. Kidnapping cases significantly dropped in the current reporting period.

Figure 2: Percentage of Total - 2020
- SALW 79%
- IED 14%
- Mixed (IED&SALW) 1%
- Kidnapping 6%

Figure 2: Percentage of Total- 2021
- SALW 80%
- IED 10%
- Mixed (IED&SALW) 2%
- Kidnapping 8%

17.   **Kidnap-for-Ransom (KFR).** The year 2021 during the period in review has registered over 82 cases of Kidnapping, a sharp increase from the same period last year which had registered 56 cases. Most of these incidents have not been claimed by any of the known terrorist groups. It can be an indication of organized criminal activity that has seen the lucrative business of KFR, and therefore one can anticipate an increase of such acts, that are not associated necessarily with terrorist activity.

18.   **Terrorist Groups Activities.** The five most active terrorist and violent extremist groups during the period under review were Mai-Mai groups, Allied Democratic Front (ADF), Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and Al-Sunnah Wa Jummah (ASWJ) in descending order. Mai-Mai groups were responsible for 300 attacks that led to 462 deaths (322 civilians and 140 military/security). ADF carried out 163 attacks that resulted in the highest number of deaths compared to other groups

of 733 deaths (632 civilians and 101 military/security personnel). Al-Shabaab was responsible for 67 attacks that led to 280 deaths (153 civilians and 127 military/security). Boko Haram carried out 33 attacks leading to 175 deaths (67 civilians and 108 military/security) while ASWJ was responsible for 13 attacks that led to 29 deaths (27 civilians and 02 military/security).

19.   In comparison to 2020, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, ADF, Mai-Mai groups and ASWJ were the most lethal terrorist and violent extremist groups in descending order. Al-Shabaab was responsible for 125 attacks and 249 deaths (118 civilians and 131 military/security), Boko Haram was responsible for 58 attacks and 375 deaths (213 civilians and 162 military/security), ADF carried out 44 attacks that killed 275 people (247 civilians and 28 military/security), Mai-Mai groups registered 27 attacks that led to 27 deaths (12 civilians and 15 military/security). Lastly, ASWJ recorded 7 attacks and 142 deaths (112 civilians and 30 military/security).
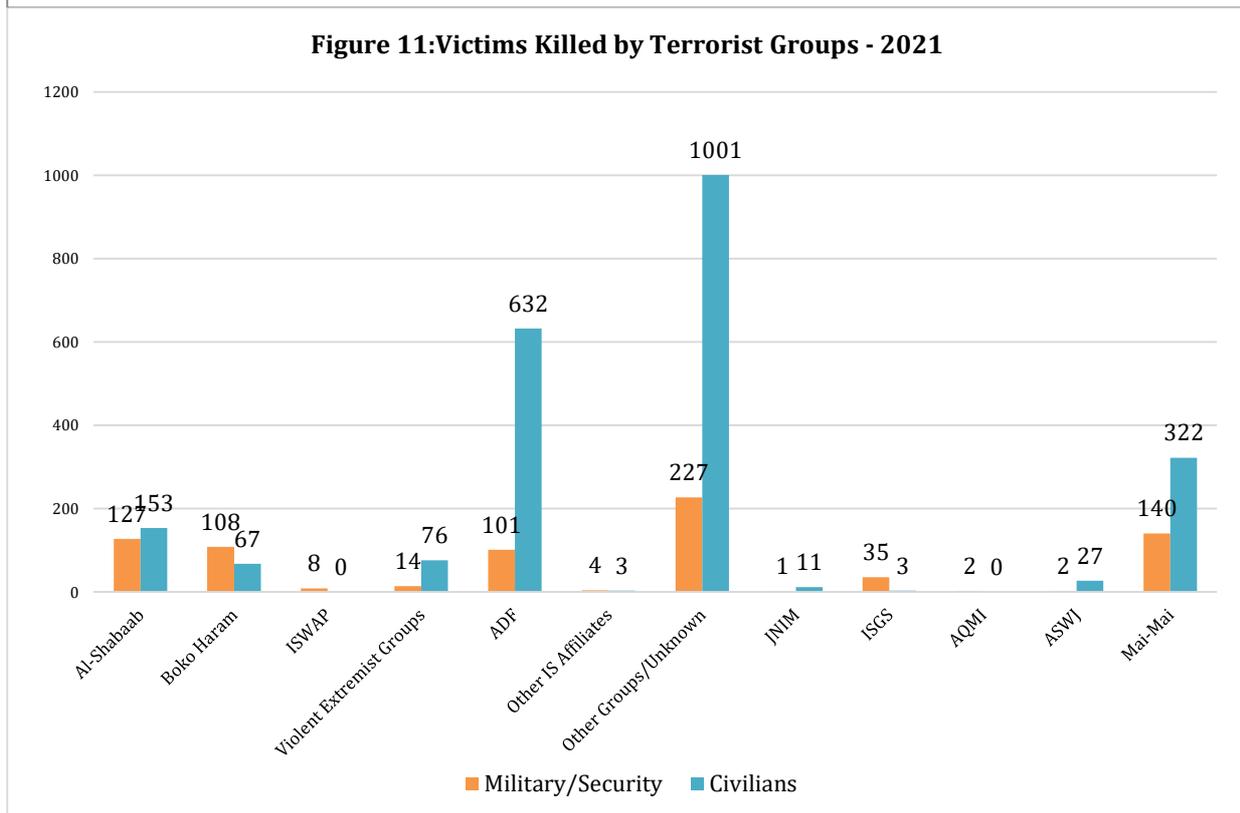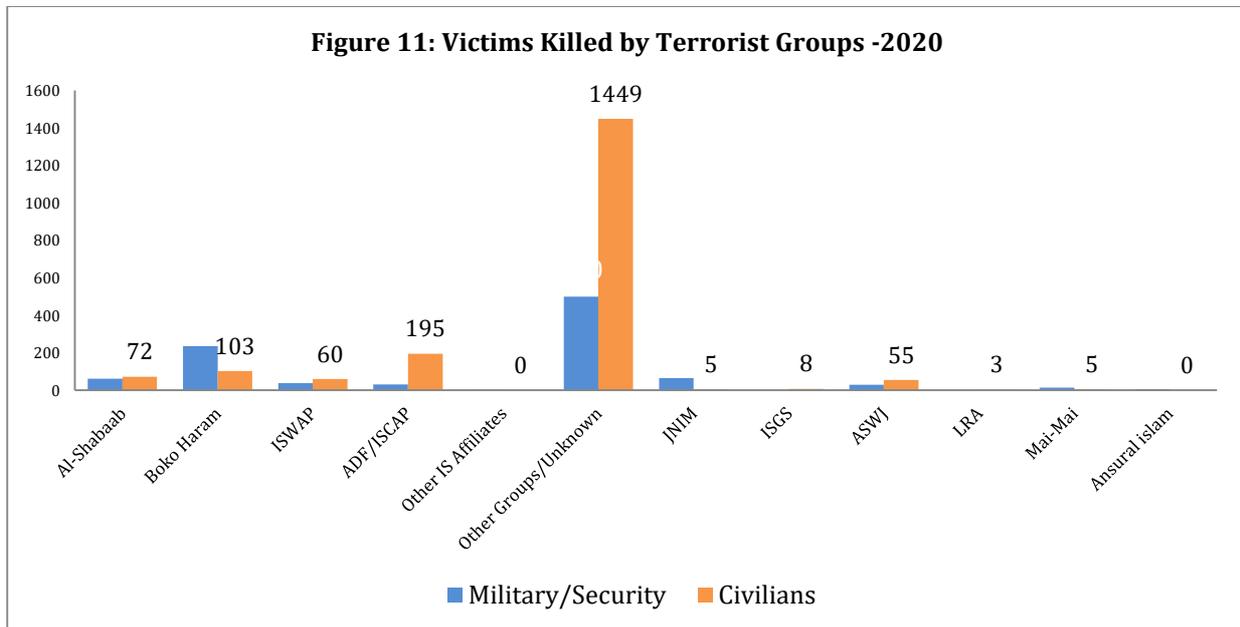
20.   **Most Lethal Terrorist Group.** During the period in review, Boko Haram was the moist lethal Terrorist Group in Africa, with an average of 5.3 deaths per attack, compared to the Continental average of 3.2 death/attack. ADF/ISCAP registered an average of 4. 5, followed by both Al-Shabaab and ISGS with 4.2 Deaths per Attack.

21.   **Primary Targets.** With 2,295 deaths, Civilians continue to be the primary targets of Terrorist Attacks, followed by 769 casualties from military, Defense and Security personnel that make up 39% of the targets, an increase of 2% since last year during the same period. International Organizations have also registered a slight increase in attacks.
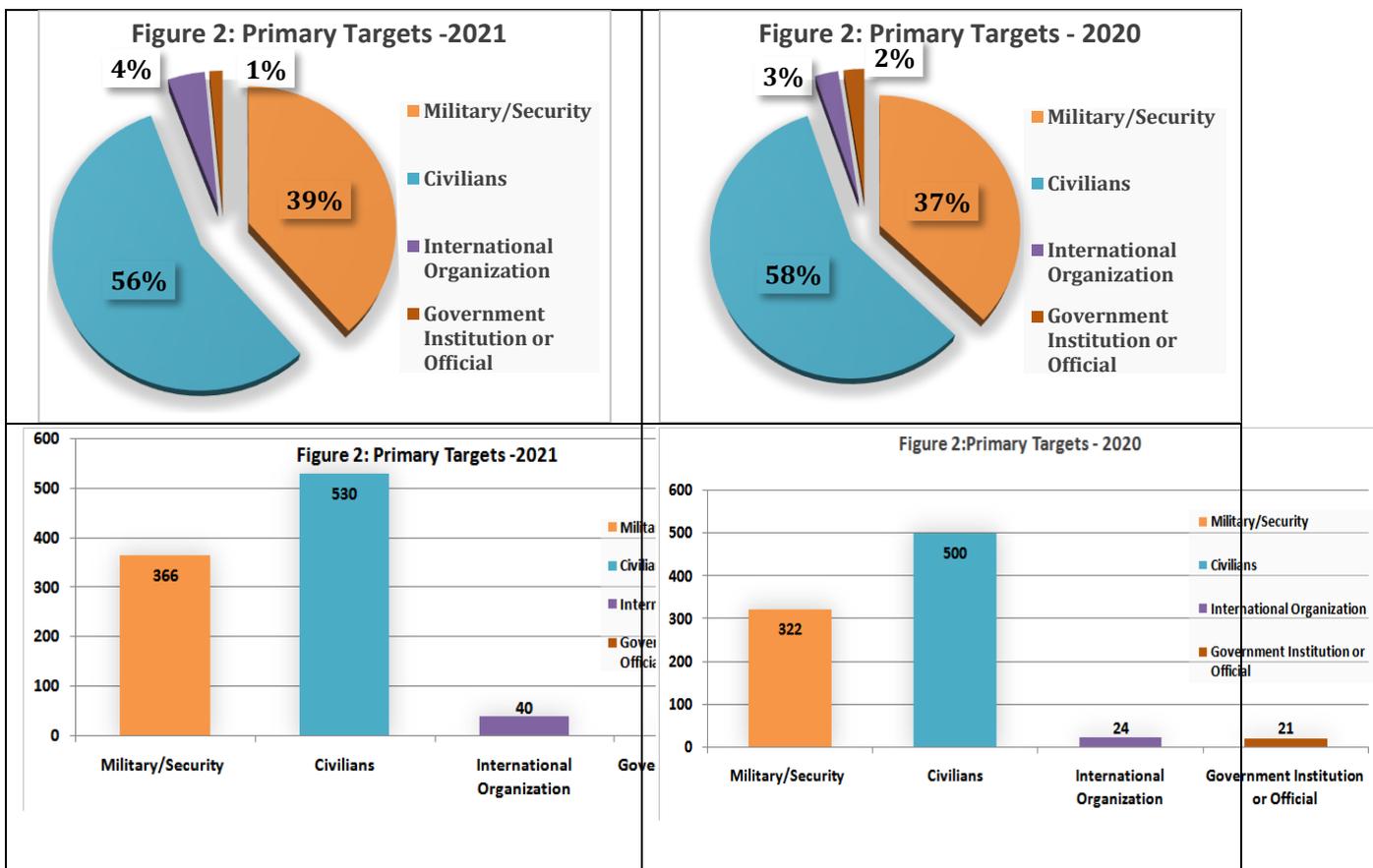
22.   **Eliminated Terrorists.** In total the first six months of 2021, registered over 1,998 terrorist eliminated. Al-Shabaab, Mai-Mai groups, Boko Haram and ADF sustained the highest number of

casualties encountered in both terrorist attacks and counter terrorism operations during the period under review. Al-Shabaab lost 670 terrorist, Mai-Mai groups suffered 438 casualties, 189 Boko Haram members were neutralized, 97 ADF members were eliminated.

Figure 11: Victims Killed by Terrorist Groups -2020

Figure 11:Victims Killed by Terrorist Groups - 2021

III.   FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SPREAD OF TERRORISM

23.   The threat of terrorism in Africa is influenced by a number of factors. These relate to Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF), the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), the links with transnational organized crime, Terrorism Financing, the proliferation of arms, weapons and ammunitions, mercenarism/Foreign Fighters and consequences of political instability in Libya and the Sahel.

24.   **Threat of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF).** The return and relocation of FTF threatens to strengthen the operational capability of local terrorist groups and affiliates. FTF have tremendous knowledge in the manufacture of IEDs. We have witness an upsurge of FTF across the continent, in particular in the Sahel and Central African Regions and more recently in Mozambique. ISIS through its news agency, Amaq, has recently published a video showing ASWJ fighters who appear to be foreigners in Mocimboa da Praia. The operational success of many terrorist groups in Africa, can be attributed to the increased capacity that such fighters have brought to the various theatres. Porous borders and weak state presence is some areas could facilitate easy movement of FTFs from and within Africa.

25.   IEDs remain the modus operandi of choice to almost all terrorist groups in Africa. The Continent registered to date 98 such attacks, resulting in over 688 deaths and more than 883 injured. East Africa, followed by West Africa registered the highest number of these attacks, 49 and 43 respectively.

26.   **Transnational Organized Crime and Financing of Terrorism.** Transnational organized crime and the running of criminal/illicit economies have been the major source of financing for terrorist organizations in Africa. The profitability of the symbiotic relationship between terrorist and transitional organized crime groups is in itself is a great financial motivation for terrorist groups to continue with their activities. Depriving terrorist and violent extremist groups of their sources of funding need be a key component of any CT Strategy. As reiterated in the conclusions of the High-Level Meeting on Combating Terrorist Financing in Africa held in Algiers, Algeria, from 9 to 10 April 2018, most African States are predominantly cash based due a dominating informal sector that evades the banking system. The over reliance on the informal sector and use of cash in transacting businesses cross countries in Africa makes it exceedingly difficult to monitor the flow of funds thereby making money laundering and terrorist financing easier and difficult to trace. In addition, the use of New Payment Methods (NPM) and New Payment Systems (NPS) such as mobile money banking and transfer, internet banking, the use of crypto-currency, ICT and the Dark web, transfer of small amounts of funds frequently to avoid detection, donations from local and foreign sympathizers are some of the techniques used by terrorists to finance their activities.

27.   It's also observed that during the COVID 19 pandemic many terrorist groups, criminals and their networks are adopting new methods of operations. What is evident, however, is that there is an increased use of cyber space by terrorist groups to re-group, conduct recruitment, transfer of funds, money laundering, cyber-attacks and many other illegal activities. These new threats left many states vulnerable to this new and emerging form of terrorism, through the abuse of digital technologies.

28.   It is clear that, with these huge sums, transnational organized crime has the potential to undermine national economies, corrupt state officials and undermine the very foundations of society.

29.   **Terrorism Financing** in Africa remains a major challenge in the prevention and countering of terrorism. Terrorist continue to fund their operations through various sources in Africa to include, Kidnapping for Ransom (KFR), drug and human trafficking, smuggling of weapons, illicit transfer of good and funds to individuals, NGOs and charitable organizations, illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources, extortion and illegal taxes, livestock theft, fake and

counterfeit medication, poaching and robbery. While terrorist financing was a challenge globally, the situation on the continent was more peculiar due to:

  a. *__Cash Based Economies.__* The economies of most African States are predominantly cash based due a dominating informal sector that evades the banking system. The over reliance on the informal sector and use of cash in transacting businesses cross countries in Africa makes it exceedingly difficult to monitor the flow of funds thereby making money laundering and terrorist financing easier and difficult to trace.

  b. *__Use of Technological based financing.__* The use of New Payment Methods (NPM) and New Payment Systems (NPS) such as mobile money banking and transfer, internet banking, the use of crypto-currency, ICT and the Dark web, transfer of small amounts of funds frequently to avoid detection, donations from local and foreign sympathizers are some of the techniques used by terrorists to finance their activities.

30.   **Proliferation of arms, weapons and ammunitions.** The proliferation of weapons in Africa is a serious challenge to sustainable peace and security on the continent. Despite efforts by Governments to control their borders, large quantities of weapons and ammunition are still able to be smuggled into many countries and regions across the continent. These included rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns with anti-aircraft visors, automatic rifles, ammunition, grenades, explosives (Semtex) and light anti-aircraft artillery (light calibre bi-tubes) mounted on vehicles. There are also indications that more advanced weapons, such as surface-to-air-missiles and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADs), may have been in the hands of Terrorist organizations in Africa.

31.   **Mercenarism.** faced with a terrorist aggression of un-proportional magnitude resulted in the emergence of new forms of mercenary activity in Africa, as many countries, have resorted to the use of Private Military Contractors and Foreign Fighters in the fight against terrorism without proper accountability mechanisms., match with an effort by communities that are left to protect themselves to form au-defense/vigilante groups that operate outside the law without state supervision. This has resulted in the escalation of attacks against unprotected civilians and unprecedented level of inter-communal fighting, exacerbating already fragile security situations of the concerned countries.

32.   Consequences of political instability in Africa. As some countries in Africa undergo profound evolution, terrorist and rebel groups have been exploiting the ensuing security vacuum to expand their territorial reach, access new sources of funding and armament, radicalize new recruits, spread their message of hate and violence, undermining the peoples' quest for peace, stability and democracy, values that are inherently opposed to the motivations and goals of terrorism.

33.   **Facilitating Factors**: a number of institutional, legal and structural weaknesses enable terrorist financing to flourish in the Africa. It was identified that a number of countries in the Continent still lack the appropriate legal regimes that seek to combat the terrorism in the continent. In countries where it exists, the institutions tasked with identifying and addressing issues relating to terrorism are either under resourced or lack competent personnel. The porous nature of African borders also enables the easy movement of persons, goods and money without detection.

34.   There are indeed many factors that are contributing to the present situation, facilitating the progress of the threat. In addition to the structural factors that need to be addressed, it becomes clear that there are many other factors that render difficult the effective and efficient prevention and combating of terrorism and violent extremism on the continent, among which:

  i.   Multiplicity and redundancy of initiatives, mechanisms and programs;

  ii.   Huge reliance on partner funding, partner support, partner assistance and increasingly foreign military intervention, all of which have contributed to increased foreign interference and weakened national sovereignty;

  iii.   Increasing reliance on foreign fighters, Mercenaries in CT operations, who operate with impunity and who are continuously the subject of human rights violations reports, not only dilute the respective states' authority but most importantly impacts negatively the trust of citizens in their state's capacity to protect them;

  iv.   In adequate Counterterrorism strategies, as they are developed not on a needs basis but as a requirement to receiving funding and support from partners, therefore not necessarily reflecting national capacities, priorities and specific contexts, negatively impacting ownership and implementation by national stakeholders and actors.

IV.   <u>AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION EFFORTS</u>

35.   The AU has made progress on this level, as the African Union Peace and Security Council has continued to promote CT and CVE with the UN Security Council and the European Union Political and Security Committee, in addition to the High level Strategic Dialogue with NATO. From a Peace and Security perspective, I wish to recall also the enhanced partnership agreement with the UN on Peace and Security.

36.   The AUC has also launched a CT and PCVE Coordination Committee between the AUC, led by our specialized institution the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism. The Committee has developed and is implementing a capacity building matrix, which ensures the creation of synergies and provides for greater coordination as well as enhanced and sustained capacity building delivery and division of labor on the implementation of the Regional CT Plans of Action and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy among other CT efforts. This is more apparent in the very successfully partnership we have built throughout the years with CTED and UNODC, all of which are a clear demonstration of the importance of building strategic partnerships abased on trust and mutual respect and understanding of each other's expertise, experience, insights and efforts.

37.   A new AU Division of Labor Arrangements with the RECs/RMs, has also been put in place, as part of the AU institutional reform. In the operationalization of the ASF we have undertaken to realign the use of ad-hoc coalitions through a more coordinated regional approach to fighting terrorism, and continued to monitor and assist AU Member States in the implementation of the AU Instruments on Terrorism, Mercenaries and related crimes.

38.   The AU for its part, through its specialized institutions such as the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), has been and continues to assist AU RECs and Member States in various ways including, inter alia:

  a.   Assistance to RECs/RMs and MS in the development /review of their respective CT Strategies and PoA. In 2021, such assistance has been rendered to Lesotho, Burkina

Faso, Cameroon, and SADC in the elaboration or review of their respective CT Strategies and PoA. Zimbabwe will benefit from the program as well in 2021.

b. CT legislative assistance to RECs/RMs and MS. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the SADC have benefited from such assistance in 2021 through workshops on Human Rights and the Rule of Law. Cameroon and Zimbabwe will get legislative assistance to develop their respective CT legal frameworks.

c. Building of CT technical capacities for MS. This includes workshops on CFT for FATF-Styled Regional Bodies such as GABAC and ESAAMLG which were implemented during the course of the year. These will be replicated for GIABA and MENAFATF and the ACSRT will also organize a Coordination Meeting for FATF Regional-style bodies before the 2021 ends. Other training programs such as Counter Improvised Explosive Devices (CIED) and Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Sensitive Sites will be embarked on as well. The ACSRT also provides technical assistance to RECs and, in this regard, it is extending assistance to SADC in the development of its Regional CT Centre.

d. Capacity building programs for the enhancement of PCVE capacities of MS and RECs. These include the joint course with KAIPTC, workshop with UNOCT-Sudan, workshop with FemWise; and joint program with Swiss-government on PVE.

e. Assessment of MS' CT capacities. In this regard, the ACSRT assessed Cameroon and Zimbabwe in 2021.

f. Early Warning and PVE programs. The ACSRT collaborated with the UNDP to develop a Toolkit on EWER and PVE and the toolkit will be implemented with SADC and ECCAS RECs.

g. Awareness Raising: The ACSRT has also contributed to the First Youth Forum on PVE and will organize CT/VE awareness program in Zimbabwe.

h. Information sharing, analysis and publications. In this regard, the ACSRT produces and distributes Daily highlights, Periodical bulletins, Analytical reports, a Joint Analytical report with NATO, and Policy briefs. Additionally, the Centre is the course of finalizing the First Comprehensive Continental CT Training Manual in addition to producing the Joint NATO-ACSRT Quarterly Threat Assessment Report on the G5-Sahel Countries.

39.   The Ongoing cooperation with the relevant UN entities, such as UNCTED, UNOCT, UNODC, UNICRI, is on the right track. While implementing a joing legal assistance program to eastern and southern African Member States with UNODC, we are currently working with both UNCTED and UNOCT on assisting a number of AU MS in the establishment of National CT Fusion Centres in addition to the development of a Compendium of Best Practices for the Establishment of such structures.

40.   Having said that, greater coordination and consultation are however, still required on such an important subject, this will ensure the creation of synergies, building on each others efforts and will allow us to avoid duplication and waste of valuable resources. As a Starting point, there is an urgent need at the regional levels to conduct mapping excercices to to identify the existing CT Mechanims, initiatives, programs and Stakeholders. There would also be a need to create CT and PCVE Coordination Committees, that will be responsible for providing oversight and strategic level guidance to the joint Working Groups (that will need to subsequently be established) on the implementation of the respective regional CT Strategies and Plans of Action, including the AU CT Plan of action and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy among other CT efforts.

V.   COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

41.   It is noted that the nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime continues to be a major factor in the violence and crime that ravage the Africa continent, affecting state and human security. The African Union for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL) was established to enhance police cooperation in the continent in combating terrorism and transnational organized crime.

42.   The core concern of the law enforcement agencies of the AU Member States is to prevent, detect and investigate terrorism and transnational organized crime in coordination and collaboration with national and international law enforcement agencies. In this regard, AFRIPOL seeks to support the capabilities of national law enforcement agencies to deal with transnational organized crime including terrorism. As terrorists and transnational organized criminals cooperate, the response will demand much greater cooperation between relevant national agencies to prevent and counter the threats.

43.   AFRIPOL, in its support to the police agencies of the AU Member States, has undertaken various activities in accordance with the AFRIPOL Statute. In this regard, AFRIPOL has developed a five years' work plan 2020-2024, that seeks to enhance cooperation among member states in preventing and countering the threats of terrorism and transnational organized crime.

The African Police Communication System (AFSECOM)

44.   The spread of extremist and terrorist groups on the continent calls for sharing of intelligence and exchange and support in counterterrorism operations. AFRIPOL developed a framework for cooperation and information-sharing among the Member States. The development of AFSECOM is intended to facilitate easy and secure communication, and sharing of information and data among the police agencies. The AFSECOM system will be upgraded in terms of security, storage and application features, and it is planned that the system will be fully operational in 2022, in line with the Silencing of the Guns Master Roadmap. The PSC Communiqués PSC/PR/BR. (DCCXXXI), PSC/PR/COMM.1(DCCCXLV), PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLVII), and PSC/PR/COMM.1014(2021) at its 731st , 845th, 957th and 1014th meeting held on 8 November 2017, 25 April 2019, 20 October 2020 and 26 July 2021, respectively, welcomed the establishment of AFSECOM and the progress made in the operationalization of AFRIPOL.

45.   AFRIPOL is also working to support Member States in their efforts to prevent and combat terrorism through, among others, providing and coordinating training and technical expertise. The establishment and functioning of the 55 AFRIPOL National Liaison Offices (NLOs) within the AU member states is one strategy for collective security approach in the fight against terrorism and TOC. The AFRIPOL NLOs are a critical structure for the full and effective functioning of AFRIPOL – as they are responsible for coordinating the linkages between the police agencies of the Member States. They are also to be the link between the national police agencies and the AFRIPOL Secretariat – serving as the national level contact points on all AFRIPOL matters, to enhance cooperation and coordination among AFRIPOL and police agencies.

46.   The AFRIPOL organized five indication workshops for the Heads of AFRIPOL NLOs, from 2018 to 2020, on the use of the AFSECOM system. The workshops were an orientation exercise for Member States on the role and responsibilities of the NLOs to facilitate the implementation

of AFRIPOL mandate and to familiarized the NLOs with use of the AFSECOM platform and its equipment.

47.   To date AFRIPOL organized has held two meetings of the Heads of the AFRIPOL National Liaison Offices (NLOs) in February 2019 and March 2021. The meetings were an opportunity to update the NLOs on the activities analyzed the threats and challenges posed by transnational organized crime in all its aspects, and terrorism, in the continent, especially in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The meetings also enabled discussion on improving coordination among the NLOs, and strengthening efforts by Member States to combat emerging transnational threats and challenges to regional and continental security. During, the second meeting the NLOs were updated on the AFSECOM Communication System, the AFRIPOL E-Learning project, the AFRIPOL Cyber Security Strategy and AFRIPOL Community Policing Strategy.

48.   The AFRIPOL in its efforts to utilize the AFSECOM and in partnership with the Federal Police of Germany developed a three-year programme in 2020, to establish an AFRIPOL Forensic Centre on Documents and Biometrics to combat document fraud. It is expected that the envisaged Forensic Centre will strengthen AFRIPOL efforts to combat criminality and organized crime, including transnational threats such as terrorism, drugs and weapons trafficking, human trafficking and human smuggling. It will also strengthen AFRIPOL databases, which will advance AFRIPOL IT capacity. The Communiqué of the 957th PSC meeting endorsed the project.

 Cyber Security

49.   AFRIPOL also established a Working Group on Cybercrime in December 2018. The group was composed from Member States experts from Algeria, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mauritania, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Sao-Tome and Principe, Sudan, Senegal and Uganda. The main objective of the AFRIPOL Working Group on Combating Cybercrime is to provide advice to AFRIPOL Secretariat on technical, legal, policy, institutional and related matters on cyber security. Indeed, the increasing use of information and communication technologies by terrorist groups to advance their agenda demands that Member States deploy skills and technologies to anticipate, intercept and counter the actions of such groups, and to share a counter narrative with their citizens.

50.   The AFRIPOL in collaboration with INTERPOL prepared the African Cyber Threat Assessment Report 2021. The report was based on a collection of data from 22 African countries. The findings are expected to help enhance cybercrime intelligence in Africa, strengthen cooperation for joint e-operations against cybercrime, and develop regional capacity and other capabilities to combat cybercrime, during the course of 2022. The report findings are a strong baseline upon which other bigger continental projects in combatting cybercrime can be built.

51.   Also, as part of the AFRIPOL efforts to combat illegal use of crypto-currency funding activities and money laundering is in the process to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the crypto-currency provider COINBAS. The MoU is aimed to ensure structured cooperation between AFRIPOL and COINBASE to support Member States efforts to the illegal usage of crypto-currency.

AFRIPOL Strategies

52.   In pursuance of the relevant provision of the AFRIPOL five years' work plan 2020-2024, AFRIPOL developed the following strategies:

i.   AFRIPOL Community Policing Strategy
53.   As follow up to the virtual Coordination Meeting on Community Policing, held on 27th October 2020. AFRIPOL Secretariat has developed the AFRIPOL Community Policing Strategy. The main objective of the Strategy is to highlight the various mechanisms aiming at involving citizens in the prevention of crime in their local communities. The strategy presents a number of elements, relevant strategies and programs to support police agencies in developing their programs for community policing.

ii.   AFRIPOL Cybercrime Strategy
54.   Cybercrime is becoming one of the fastest growing forms of transnational crime facing AU Member States, especially during the COVID 19 Pandemic. The, main objective of AFRIPOL's Cybercrime Strategy is, therefore to outline a roadmap for the fight against cybercrime to help Member States develop coherent control methodologies and ensure safe and secure use of the internet. This strategy is also expected to strengthen the AFRIPOL's and Member States capacity through specialized training in the fight against cybercrime, the development of harmonized legislations and enhance cooperation among Member States to ensure permanent assessment of the threat of cybercrime at the continental level.

iii.   Silencing the Guns
55.   It can be noted that SALW are one of the conditions conducive to the spread of transnational organized crime, terrorism. It is in this regards, that AFRIPOL is supporting the work of the AU- Regions standing Committee on SALW to develop polices and strategies to control the follow of illicit arms, the collection of illicit weapons in the possession of civilians and to enhance the capacity of Member States in the fight against illicit SALW.

iv.   Strengthen cooperation with police agencies

56.   In recognition of the transnational nature of the threat, and in line with the relevant provisions of Article 4 of the AFRIPOL Statute, on functions, AFRIPOL is engaging with other police cooperation organizations and relevant organizations, to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for cooperation with AFRIPOL. The agreement between the African Union and INTERPOL in relation to the cooperation between INTERPOL and AFRIPOL was signed in January 2019. This MOU is intended to facilitate closer and stronger cooperation between the two institutions in combating transnational organized crime in Africa in general. Indeed, the main focus of the MOU is on sharing information and data and interoperability between the INTERPOL I-24/7 communication system and AFSECOM systems. This will enable AFRIPOL to access up-to-date global criminal databases of INTERPOL, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the MOU.

57.   It is noted that one of the functions of AFRIPOL, as stated in Article 4 (h) of the AFRIPOL Statute, is to "enable planning and coordination of joint patrols and operations". In this regard, AFRIPOL is jointly planning with INTERPOL first cross border cooperation and coordination exercise for combating terrorism and TOC, during the end of 2021.

58.   In AFRIPOL efforts to strengthen cooperation with police agencies, to combat criminality and organized crime, including transnational threats such as terrorism, drugs and weapons trafficking, human trafficking and human smuggling. AFRIPOL is part of the INTERPOL Dialogue. The Dialogue brings international and regional law enforcement bodies together to ensure an effective multilateral policing and coordinated approach to global security threats. AFRIPOL participated at the Third and Fourth Dialogues in June 2019 and in May 2020 and highlighted Africa organized crime security challenges.

59.   At the regional level, AFRIPOL continued its cooperation enhancing and coordination between the AU regions. AFRIPOL organized the first coordination meeting between AFRIPOL and the RECs/RMs, from 3 to 4 November 2019, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting enabled the RECs/RMs to exchange views on what role they can play in enhancing cooperation and coordination between the regions and AFRIPOL in combating transnational organized crime. Also, the meeting identified priority areas and strategies to better prevent and fight against transnational organized crime and emerging crimes in the continent.

60.   In the same vein AFRIPOL strengthened its cooperation African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organizations and since 2019 is participating at their annual general meetings with the objective to enhance cooperation, identify specific and pragmatic ways and means to strengthen information exchange amongst the national police agencies.

VI.   <u>CHALLENGES</u>

61.   The challenges undercutting efforts to combat terrorism are at two levels, with the first being at the national and regional levels and second at the Level of the Commission and its specialized offices namely the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) and the African Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL).

62.   The terrorist threat remains as present as ever, and Africa continues to display significant vulnerabilities. Effectively preventing and combating terrorism requires renewed and firm commitment from Member States. It calls for enhanced joint action, given the transnational nature of the terrorist groups, which are skillfully taking advantage of the limits of the territorial jurisdictions of States and differences in terms of judicial procedures, as well as of existing institutional weaknesses, the porous nature of African borders and other shortcomings. The continent ought to take stock of the wealth of knowledge, experience and capacity it has acquired to better manage the present security situation, anticipate future mutations, devise efficient and flexible strategies to deal with the challenges at hand and adapt to rapidly evolving circumstances. The present meeting provides a unique opportunity for a more effective collective action that must be fully seized.

63.   The ACSRT, the main AU body for the implementation of the counter-terrorism framework, continues to operate with limited infrastructure, human and financial resources, in spite of the wide mandate entrusted to it and the expectations placed on the Centre. To that effect A proposed structure of ACSRT has been drawn up with the assistance of Consultants engaged by the AUC within the context of the AU restructuring exercise. This has been submitted to AHRM for further handling and is still pending approval.

64.   In addition, the instrument creating the ACSRT requires that an Advisory Board be established by the Chairperson of the Commission to assist in the running of the Centre. The Board has not yet been composed since the establishment of the Centre. It is considered that the establishment of the Board will greatly enhance the ability of the Centre to deliver on its mandate.

65.   Moreover, the Centre and AFRIPOL both lacks the appropriate funding to allow them to carry out capacity building programmes and other missions have been created to fulfil. Heavily reliant on partner funding, making dependent on available funding and not being able to project their activities beyond a specific time frame, more promptly and efficiently.

66.   In addition, it is necessary to strengthen the ACSRT Focal Points mechanism by designating well-positioned institutions that are authorized to share quality information with the Centre and respond to queries channeled through it as per the relevant Communiqués of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), in particular Paragraph 17 of the 687th meeting Communiqué requesting the ACSRT to work closely with Member States with a view to reconstituting its Focal Points for liaison and coordination. These Focal Points must be institutions, rather than individual civil servants, that are invested with the required competence and mandate to access information and decision-makers in the relevant intelligence and security services.

67.   One of the important priorities of AFRIPOL is to strengthen its IT capacity, the AFSECOM System and the AFRIPOL Forensic Centre. The AFSECOM system is facing currently some challenges in terms of connectivity. It's anticipated that this will complicate finalizing the AFSECOM datacenter and other IT capacities within AFRIPOL. This situation will present a challenge in the future to realizing the different IT systems full operationalization, with the AFRIPOL Secretariat. It is recommended that AFRIPOL have its own VSAT connection.

VII.   RECOMMENDATIONS

68.   It is recommended as follows:
   a. ***Mainstreaming CT in APSA.***A more direct mainstreaming of Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention/Countering of Violent Extremism by the African Union (AU) in the APSA could enhance effort to directly address issues of Violent Extremism and Terrorism on the continent.
   b. ***Improved Intelligence Capability***. Appropriate domestic legislation, drawn from international best practice, to facilitate the improvement of the Intelligence capability of Member States to legally intercept communication and dominate cyberspace with the intent of disrupting Terrorist groups communication, financial facilitation networks and logistics supply chains.
   c. ***The AFRIPOL Community Policing Strategy and the Cybercrime strategies.*** These strategies can only make a difference in fighting crime and other transnational security threats, if they are effectively used by the police agencies of the Member States.
   d. ***Cyber Security.*** There is an urgent need for Member States to ratify the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and the Protection of Personal Data (Malabo Convention), in order to have a continental harmonized approach to combating cybercrime and transnational crime. It is also vital to develop an African convention on cybercrime in light of the increasing threats of cybercrime and cyber-attacks in the continent.

e. ***The complex alliance between terrorist groups and organized crime groups.*** The growing linkages between terrorism and violent extremism on the one hand, and transnational organized crime, on the other, calls for dynamism cooperation and coordination to counter this growing phenomenon.

f. ***Border control and management.*** Although considerable efforts have been made to establish regional and international standards and norms for border control and management, including on equipment and training, its essential to do more in this area, especially, strengthen the capacities of police agencies.

g. ***Trust Building between Governments and Local Communities.*** The denial of territory to the Terrorist Organizations, degrading their capacity, will and cohesion to continue to operate could be greatly facilitated with a focus by the AU and its Member States on building trust and mutual confidence between Government Authorities/Agencies and Local Communities in the areas affected by terrorist activities. A number of specific schemes that could facilitate this include:

   i. ***Winning the Hearts and Minds of Local Communities***. The need to promote decentralized Governance in line with the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization and Local Development. Respect for Human Rights and the Rule of Law and a blend of Human Security with the traditional National Security that is currently prevalent in most Member States.

   ii. ***Preventing Violent Extremism***. Government and civil society actors should ensure that a whole-of-community approach guides their interventions to prevent further violence; they should identify and address risk factors at the community level and design responses that recognize the strong influence of community support for or rejection of violent extremism.

   iii. ***Youth and Women Participation.*** In consultation with community leaders, PCVE programs should involve youth and women from local communities in the development of strategies for effected areas.

   iv. ***Economic programs and policies to support the youth.*** It is very important that the youth and vulnerable communities are supported and sensitized to comprehend all contemporary threats. This will prevent terrorist groups to target and recruit youths within their ranks.

   v. ***Media and Civil Society.*** The need for a clear communication strategy that captures the role of the media, civil society and religious leaders, as stakeholders in the PCVE strategy development and implementation.

VIII.   OBSERVATIONS

69.   While commendable progress has been made in tackling the threat of terrorism at the international and continental levels, there is a growing realization that the threat the continent is currently facing is a complex one. This is particularly true in the Sahel region, where drug and arms trafficking, human smuggling, kidnapping-for-ransom, illicit proliferation of arms and money laundering - all of which are variants of transnational organized crime - have become intimately intertwined with terrorist groups' activities and sources of financing. This situation adversely affects security and stability in the region.

70.   Africa has indeed learned from the experience of the last two decades, that the dominant security approach has shown its limitations. Effective response to terrorism, therefore, requires a broad range and coordinated policy responses to strengthen state capacities to address

underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. The UN CT Strategy along with the UNSG PVE Plan of Action, provide that framework, through which the AUC and its specialized institution have been assisting Member States in their implementation, in addition to meeting their international CT obligations as set forth in the Universal CT Instruments human rights and the rule of law.

71.   CT approaches need to be recalibrated to specific regional context, priorities and capacities to effectively address all manifestations, root causes of the threat and its consequences on whole communities and entire regions.

72.   While the COVID-19 pandemic poses multitudes of challenges to the peace and security landscape, it also provides opportunities to harness Africa's efforts towards working decisively to end violent conflicts on the continent and address their root causes. It is critical time to think outside the box and allow space to engage in innovative ways to stopping the progression of the terror:

a. There is need to engage terrorists and violent extremists in dialogue and encourage them to surrender, in particular those that have been forcibly enrolled into the ranks of these groups. At the same time, we need to demonstrate as much resoluteness to eradicate the root causes conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism as the resolute demonstrated to combat the threat altogether;

b. More innovation and partnerships to help prevent the spread of terrorism and violent extremism at national, regional and continental levels, using available resources;

c. It is important to move beyond predominantly military action to include soft approaches, by promoting inclusive good governance, accountability as well as socio-economic developments to address the aforementioned structural issues. This cannot be overemphasized given the recent threats to democratic governance in the region including popular uprising and unconstitutional change of government, a situation that underscores citizens weariness of the status quo and demands for better living conditions;

d. With the multitude of security arrangements and forces operating within the Sahel, Africa need to set-up proper and stronger coordination between the different forces operating in the field and clarity with regard to command and control. It is important to review financial implications of actual deployments in the Sahel, their efficiency and consider building more trust and investment in upgrading local defense and security forces;

e. Lastly, Africa need to build sustainable Counterterrorism Capacity of the concerned Member States. Sustainable homegrown counter terrorism measures are the only long-term solutions to the prevention of further attacks and spread of the threat on the African Continent.

73.   Close cooperation and coordination with the private sector under a whole-of-government and whole-of-society, action-oriented and well-resourced approach will contribute to effective and sustainable response. The borderless nature of the threat exposes the world to emerging forms of criminality and security threats that they are poorly equipped, both technically and financially, to detect, investigate and to respond to the threat.

74.   In 2022, the AU will mark the 20th anniversary of the African Union Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. The AU Commission is taking this opportunity to review

the existing continental Counterterrorism Framework, take-stock of the progress made it's in its implementation thus far and propose updates to effectively reverse the present worrying tide, while ensuring that our continental instruments reflect the international obligations set by the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and in compliance with International Norms, Standards and Recommended Best Practices including decisions and recommendations of Council since 2002.

75.   The present situation calls for an urgent recalibration of our approach to adequately address the threats in all its forms and manifestations and its root causes. The approach needs to be flexible and reactive enough to allow us to adjust to the development of the threat. Africa need to anticipate how this threat will likely evolve both in nature and magnitude. Security Council decisions should be adopted to address a number of terrorism related problems that have the potential to fuel further the threats of Terrorism and Violent Extremism and contribute to it expansion, in regions such as Africa. These will include decisions on the practice of the use of Foreign Fighters or Mercenaries (from other conflict zones, incl. Former FTFs).

76.   It is important to consider cross-cutting issues that will have an impact on the current security situation in Africa, such as how for instance global warming and humanitarian need can be exploited by terrorist groups. AU Commission need to review for instance the financial implications of actual deployments in areas such as the Sahel and elsewhere, while evaluating existing Strategies and Plans of Action, including anticipating how the so-called Taliban success, will boosts the morale of wannabe Jihadists and Nostaligique Veteran terrorists.

77.   On the way forward, looking ahead into the new decade, and anticipating the new forms that the threat will morph into, greater coordination and consultation will be the condition for success. Africa need to listen more to each other to learn more from one another and accept that we are all facing the same threat but in different forms and manifestations with different underlying conditions conducive to its spread. One-size-fits all solutions to a complex threat as terrorism should be avoided. A Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach become requirements in particular as we deal with the challenge of handling, rehabilitation and reinsertion of former FTF and victims of terrorism. The Private Sector would need to increasingly be involved in particular Tech companies to help thwart online radicalization and the use of technology to finance, recruit, plan and successfully execute terror attacks.