



UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY AWARENESS RAISING IN AFRICA:

BUILDING AN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN GLOBAL COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

**MANDELA RHODES PLACE HOTEL
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CO-CHAIRS' RECOMMENDATIONS

On 24-25 June 2009, the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), with the support of the governments of Germany and The Netherlands, hosted a workshop in Cape Town with representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs) from across Africa working on an array of issues related to implementation of the UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as from the United Nations and the governments of Germany and South Africa. The workshop was intended to raise awareness of the UN Strategy among African CSOs and explore the possibilities for greater civil society participation in efforts to implement it in a manner that reflects the different local contexts, needs, and priorities across the continent. The workshop is part of a larger project aimed at raising awareness of the UN Strategy among civil society groups around the world and is based on the belief that the UN Strategy provides civil society a unique opportunity to engage on a range of security issues from which they have too often been excluded.

The participants widely agreed that the Strategy offers a useful entry point for civil society engagement on counterterrorism-related issues and a unique opportunity to push for a recalibration of counterterrorism efforts to better reflect African perspectives and priorities. It was noted that Africa has had a complicated relationship with the United States and the West on the issue of terrorism since 9/11. Beginning in 2001, African countries came under increasing pressure from the United States and the UN Security Council to implement a one-size-fits-all, primarily security-focused response to terrorism, which in pursuit of Western security priorities largely sidelined African perspectives on the issue. With the adoption of the UN Strategy in 2006 and its emphasis on addressing underlying social, political, and economic conditions that give rise to terrorism, it was suggested that "Africa's voice" on counterterrorism has become much louder. Combined with the change in the U.S. administration and the end of the so-called "war on terrorism," it was agreed that the current climate offers a unique opportunity to recalibrate the international response to terrorism to better reflect African priorities and those of civil society.

Particular attention was given to the Strategy's two pillars relating to conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights. The Strategy, it was noted, provides an important tool for civil society to remind governments of their responsibilities with regard to development and human rights and an opportunity to help shift the emphasis of counterterrorism efforts more towards these areas. It was also suggested that the Strategy gives political cover and

support to CSOs working on the more politically sensitive issues of counterterrorism that have historically been the exclusive domain of states.

Although the Strategy's broad provisions were applauded, implementation, it was stressed, is the key. In this regard, while member states have the primary responsibility for implementing its provisions, the Strategy does provide for a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach that includes a role for civil society. The workshop it was agreed provided an excellent basis for the development of concrete recommendations and the formulation of a network of civil society groups working on Strategy-related issues to help improve their contributions and facilitate interaction with the United Nations on the issue.

The workshop was conducted under the Chatham House Rule, i.e., all of the discussion was off the record and not for attribution. The following "Co-Chairs' Recommendations" emerged from the discussions and do not necessarily reflect the views of all of the participants:

1. **Highlighting the important contributions that CSOs can make to the implementation of the UN Strategy in Africa:** Greater efforts are needed to highlight the many positive contributions CSOs can make to Strategy implementation. These contributions include: 1) conducting research and analysis, which could be used to inform the work of the United Nations, African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and national governments; 2) raising awareness of the importance of human rights-based approaches to counterterrorism, including as enshrined in the UN Strategy, and of enhancing criminal justice frameworks to combat and prevent terrorism effectively; 3) providing capacity-building training and other forms of assistance (e.g., the drafting of training manuals) to a range of actors, including governments, the African Union, the RECs, and, in order to ensure responsible media coverage of terrorism and governments' response to it, journalists; 4) raising awareness of the seriousness of the threat and mobilizing public support for responsible government measures to address it; 5) reaching out to vulnerable communities that intergovernmental and government bodies have trouble reaching; 6) reminding governments of the commitments they made in endorsing the UN Strategy and monitoring on-the-ground efforts to translate the Strategy into action at the national level; and 7) more broadly raising awareness of and supporting and promoting implementation of the UN Strategy.
2. **Raising awareness of the UN Strategy in Africa:** More efforts are needed to raise awareness about the UN Strategy among civil society actors in Africa and its significance for the continent. The United Nations, the African Union, the RECs, African states, and those few CSOs who are already familiar with the Strategy should make awareness raising of the Strategy and the role of the United Nations in fighting terrorism more of a priority. More awareness about the Strategy in Africa will help legitimize counterterrorism efforts, remove the stigma left by the U.S.-lead "War on Terror", and possibly create more space for CSO engagement on issues related to terrorism and counterterrorism.
3. **Increasing CSO engagement on terrorism and counterterrorism in Africa:**
 - a. CSOs should seek to become more engaged in this discourse. These efforts can take advantage of the UN Strategy's breadth and be framed in the contexts of rule of law promotion, conflict prevention, peace building, or good governance when/where the rhetoric of "counterterrorism" is too muscular.

- b. CSOs from various subregions in Africa should focus on identifying relevant areas of the Strategy where they can add the most value, recognizing that many CSOs are already engaged on issues related to Pillar I (addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism) and IV (promoting the rule of law and protecting human rights while countering terrorism).
- c. The goal should be to integrate any new Strategy-related activities into existing CSO programs, without compromising and without necessarily placing a “counterterrorism” label on them. However, interested CSOs should use the Strategy and the legitimacy it provides to raise funds and provide cover for counterterrorism-related work.
- d. CSOs working on issues of governance, democracy, poverty reduction, and with marginalized communities should not shy away from discussions of terrorism and counterterrorism but engage proactively thereby denying governments a monopoly over the debates. This engagement is essential for ensuring that the “softer” and less-militaristic approach to counterterrorism reflected in the Strategy takes root on the continent itself. CSOs can use the Strategy to give them political cover and support when trying to engage in related counterterrorism activities.
- e. More resources are needed to allow African CSOs to organize and participate in meetings concerning the UN Strategy, which could lead to the development of CSO programs aimed at furthering its implementation. More attention should also be paid to strengthening the technical, expert, and other capacities of CSOs to better equip them for engaging on counterterrorism-related issues.
- f. CSOs should undertake counterterrorism activities that promote rule of law and criminal justice based responses to terrorism emphasizing a “whole of government” approach that covers related crimes and relevant officials. Free from the bureaucratic constraints under which many government officials are forced to operate, CSOs can seek to engage across the silos that exist in many African governments.
- g. African civil society groups should promote a message that reverses the counterterrorism and development debate and pitches counterterrorism efforts as part of broader development and capacity building efforts, not the other way around.
- h. Member states should support more CSO involvement in Strategy implementation activities, a position reflected in the Strategy which each endorsed.
- i. The United Nations, African Union, RECs, African states, and CSOs should encourage more involvement of grass-root players, including community-based organizations, in Strategy and other counterterrorism-related issues. These types of organizations could be invited to meetings and training workshops.
- j. As one looks at ways to deepen CSO contributions to implementation of the UN Strategy on the continent, one must keep in mind the complexity of both the civil society terrain in Africa and the relationships between civil society and governments and intergovernmental bodies across the continent.

- k. Recognizing the leading role that women’s CSOs play in conflict resolution, peace-building, and other activities that receive significant attention in the Strategy, gender issues need to be mainstreamed into Strategy implementation efforts.
4. **Enhancing the capacity of CSOs to engage constructively on counterterrorism:**
 - a. CSOs should recognize that terrorism does pose a real threat to the continent and that it needs to be countered robustly, but within a human rights and rule of law framework.
 - b. To be more credible partners for African governments, many of which are reluctant to engage with CSOs on these, and/or be more effective advocates, CSOs need to increase their understanding and awareness of the threat and what is needed to address it effectively.
 - c. CSOs should express a coherent message and engage in a common set of activities to address the challenge of repressive counterterrorism measures. This could involve i) agreement on a set of principles and policy recommendations for ending repressive counterterrorism measures **and** proposing and/or supporting those that are effective; and ii) organizing an advocacy campaign and communications effort to persuade policymakers and the public on the need to adopt agreed principles and recommendations. Both efforts should be framed as part of a broader international effort to reorient counterterrorism policy away from a war paradigm and toward a more holistic approach
 5. **Involving the media:** CSOs should engage more effectively and proactively with the media to raise awareness about the Strategy.
 6. **Providing CSOs with the necessary space and information:**
 - a. The United Nations and other actors interested in promoting effective responses to terrorism on the continent should highlight the need for all African governments to give CSOs the space and information necessary to allow them to contribute to addressing the threat.
 - b. CSOs need to educate governments that by sharing more information with and seeking to engage with civil society, governments are enhancing their security.
 7. **Enhancing engagement between CSOs and the African Union and the RECs on issues related to terrorism and counterterrorism:** Rather than establishing “counterterrorism”-specific frameworks, this engagement should take place within existing, broader, and likely more politically palatable ones that focus on broader issues related to peace and security on the continent, e.g., peace building, conflict prevention, and transnational crime. Attention should be focused on trying to operationalize these existing frameworks.
 8. **Making use of the African Peer Review Mechanism:** CSOs should seek to include issues related to terrorism and counterterrorism in the Africa Peer Review Mechanism process, including by proposing to develop and incorporate continental standards for Strategy

implementation into the process. CSOs should also be given a larger role in the peer review process.

9. **Building subregional and national capacities to implement the Strategy:** CSOs with the relevant expertise should seek to work closely with the RECs and other subregional partners in building subregional and national capacities to implement the UN Strategy and supporting implementation efforts. These partnerships could build on existing ones that have been established between the ISS and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Southern African Regional Police Chief Council Organisation (SARPCCO), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on counterterrorism and wider issues of international crime and those between the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSO) and the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) on peace building and early warning.
10. **Contributing to a “bottom-up” approach to Strategy implementation:** As part of an effort to stimulate a “bottom-up” approach to Strategy implementation, CSOs should work with subregional organizations to develop clear and realistic implementation plans that are tailored to the specific context and needs of the relevant subregion and develop ideas on how to tap into the United Nations and other resources for assistance. They should consult with the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force on how it can assist.
11. **Deepening engagement between the United Nations and CSOs on Strategy implementation:**
 - a. The secretariat of the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force should identify ways to engage more with CSOs in Africa and involve them in the Task Force’s work. This could involve i) the establishment of a UN Strategy-CSO advisory board that would provide guidance to the Task Force’s eight thematic working groups; ii) the nomination of a CSO focal point within the Task Force to facilitate UN-CSO interactions related to the implementation of the UN Strategy; and/or iii) the involvement of CSOs with relevant expertise in some or all of the eight Task Force’s thematic working groups.
 - b. The Task Force Secretariat and the individual Task Force entities such as the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) should share more information with CSOs regarding their counterterrorism activities and otherwise enhance the transparency of their work.
 - c. The Task Force Secretariat and the CTED should meet with relevant CSOs during their country visits and invite CSOs to contribute to their assessments of national counterterrorism efforts, to take advantage of their technical expertise and understanding of the local context in which states are seeking to implement the Strategy and other relevant UN counterterrorism mandates.
 - d. The UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa should be encouraged to continue to reach out to CSOs on the continent as part of its ongoing efforts to build international support for peace and development in Africa, with a view to developing a database of those African experts and CSOs involved in work related to the implementation of the UN Strategy.

- e. The UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa could play a role in improving relations among the UN system, African institutions, and civil society on Strategy implementation by bringing these multiple stakeholders together to discuss Strategy implementation on the continent and should consider jointly organizing with the UN Task Force a conference in Africa on implementing the Strategy in the region.
 - f. The United Nations should recognize that engagement with CSOs on Strategy implementation issues must not be exclusively a means of benefiting the United Nations on a narrow set of issues, but should be part of an effort on the part of the United Nations to promote the role of civil society more broadly and geared towards creating the space to allow CSOs on the ground to engage national governments and regional and international organizations in a more serious and coherent way.
 - g. African CSOs should encourage the Task Force to establish a formal mechanism to engage proactively and consistently with them and provide a CSO focal point through which the Task Force can engage.
 - h. The Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, with its presence in New York, could serve as a hub for CSO engagement with the Task Force, by helping to connect interested CSOs and CSO networks in Africa and elsewhere with the Task Force in New York.
 - i. To facilitate more effective UN-CSO engagement, greater CSO collaboration, cooperation, and networking in areas relevant to the UN Strategy should be encouraged.
12. **Maximizing the contributions of existing African civil society networks to the implementation of the UN Strategy:** Rather than creating new networks on a continent that already has a number of them working in areas related to the Strategy (e.g., peace building, conflict prevention, combating small arms and light weapons, and Security Sector Reform), initial efforts should be placed on trying to incorporate counterterrorism into existing ones, with a view to avoiding duplication and unnecessary competition among CSOs for limited funding.
- a. African civil society networks should raise awareness about the Strategy and share information and best practices in relation to civil society's efforts to promote its implementation.
 - b. More attention should be given to 1) improving the cooperation among these networks and the CSOs involved; 2) enhancing the capacities of the networks and CSOs; and 3) outlining a division of labor among the different networks working on often overlapping issues.
 - c. The African Resource Network on Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism (ARNTACT) should continue to build partnerships among researchers, practitioners, institutions, and other stakeholders involved in counterterrorism capacity-building and integrate work surrounding the implementation of the UN Strategy more fully into its activities.

13. **Considering the establishment of a CSO network dedicated to supporting Strategy implementation in Africa:** In the longer term, a network that brings together the diversity of CSOs working in each of the four pillars of the Strategy may be needed to reinforce the holistic nature of the Strategy, which calls for issues to be addressed in an integrated fashion. Such a network should be able to facilitate the sharing of UN Strategy information, experiences, and good practices between the United Nations and African CSOs and among the CSOs themselves. It should also allow CSOs in one part of Africa to connect with those in other parts of the continent working on similar UN Strategy issues.

14. **Developing a concise and user-friendly guide on how civil society can engage on Strategy implementation:** Such a guide could include information related to areas of intervention; focal points; contact details of relevant UN officials; examples of CSO activities currently underway in each of the four pillars of the Strategy; and a mapping of which CSOs are currently active in which areas. The Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation's 2008 report, *Civil Society and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Opportunities and Challenges*, could serve as the basis for such a guide.