

Report

African Union-APSTA International Colloquium of Directors of Training and Research on “Enhancement of Capacities for Integrated Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Africa” held on 28th & 29th of October 2021 at Hilton Hotel and APSTA Secretariat, Yaoundé Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

The African Peace Support Trainers Association (APSTA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission’s Political Affairs Peace and Security (PAPS) Department organized an international Colloquium for Directors of Training and Research in Africa on 28th & 29th October 2021, at the Hilton Hotel and APSTA Secretariat both in Yaoundé Cameroon. The two-day Colloquium was on the directives of the Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security (CPAPS) of the African Union Commission (AUC), issued during a high-level audience on 6th of August 2021 at the AUC in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The **overall objective** of the Colloquium was to interrogate persistent capacity deficits on integrated whole-of-society approach for preventing and countering violent extremism, devise strategies to better leverage Ad Hoc Coalitions on regional security as well as articulate ways to enhance management of forced displacements across Africa.

The first day of the Colloquium, held in the Bouma Hall, Hilton Hotel Yaoundé Cameroon, convoked about 70 high-level peace and security stakeholders from the political, diplomatic and scientific sectors; as well as 30 other experts from the continent and around the world who joined virtually. Dignitaries included the Chief of Staff, African Standby Force, Air Vice Marshall John Brian CHIKONZO, who led a five-member high delegation from the AUC; the Minister of Defence, Republic of Cameroon; APSTA Chairperson, Col. Souleymane SANGARE; the Executive Secretary of APSTA, Dr Cecile Oyono Nee THOM and Directors of Training and Research from Member Institutions of APSTA; the Ambassadors of Nigeria, Liberia, and Tunisia; Defence Attaches of the United States of America, Germany, Nigeria; representatives of international organizations domiciled in Cameroon; as well as members of the Academia.

Dignitaries, during the opening ceremony, extolled the aptness of the Colloquium’s theme as well as the imperative for addressing the problematic with urgency, to avert a bleak future across the continent. Consequently, the efforts of APSTA in taking the lead was applauded. Goodwill messages further underscored the pertinence of the support of the Government of Cameroon for APSTA, as well as pledge of more support from other stakeholders, towards continued strengthening of the Association, as well as towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Colloquium.

Subsequently, Professor Jean Emmanuel PONDJI, Vice-Rector of the University of Yaoundé II, delivered the keynote lecture on the theme, prior to subsequent sessions on the sub-themes. The Colloquium concluded on the second day with technical work sessions by Directors of Training and Research, at the APSTA Secretariat, Quartier Golf, Yaoundé Cameroon.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

In accordance with the objectives of the Colloquium, submissions from experts and discussants on enhancement of capacities for integrated approach to PCVE, affirmed the imperative of preventive measures, functional regional early warning mechanisms, prioritized governmental operational responses, synergy among multisectoral actors and links between training centres and national educational systems. Also highlighted were the urgency of coordination and integration of efforts with Regional Economic Communities, reinforcement of links with development partners, as well as emphasis on empowerment of women and youth for the crucial role they play in PCVE.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Consequent upon set objectives of the Colloquium and the five (5) point Communique endorsed at the end of the technical sessions, Recommendations cover required action on critical issues interrogated. In addition, pursuant to the recommendations, 14 training and research projects have been earmarked for 2022-23. The main recommendations are as follows:

On Integrated Approach to Preventing and Countering violent Extremism (PCVE) in Africa; the AUC, RECs, Governments, TCEs should:

- Coordinate and integrate PCVE efforts with regional economic communities/regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs) as well as member states;
- Coordinate and integrate efforts with RECs/RMs on interdiction of terrorism financing, strategic communication and people-centred approaches to PCVE;
- Facilitate women and youth empowerment and inclusion into planning and implementation of PCVE strategies;
- Raise awareness on the crucial role of communities and religious leaders in the prevention and countering of violent extremism;

On Leveraging Ad Hoc Coalitions on Regional Security in Africa; the AUC, RECs should:

- Develop mechanisms to integrate existing and future multilateral institutions into the APSA;
- Expand the scenarios for ASF deployment beyond the extant six (6) scenarios to encompass operations of Ad Hoc Coalitions;
- Determine under which circumstances it could disburse funds from the Peace Fund, to support Ad Hoc Coalitions as well as leverage such support for control, such as aligning/synchronizing the military and political strategies;
- Develop rigorous accountability, compliance and human rights mechanisms for Ad Hoc Coalitions similar to the UN HRDDP;

- Implement a revised Peace Fund to ensure sufficient, flexible and sustainable funding in support of common and shared multinational operations;
- Adopt Ad Hoc Coalitions as FIRST RESPONDERS (similar to the ACIRC concept) to regional threats that other actors are unwilling or unable to address;
- Articulate a viable conflict resolution strategy and provide for Memorandum of Understanding with the Ad Hoc Coalitions.

On De-radicalization and Whole-of-Society Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism; the AUC, RECs, Governments, TCEs should:

- Advocate investment in economic development that provide immediate and long-term empowerment opportunities and job creation in society;
- Promote religious tolerance and moderation among governments and stakeholders especially through strategic communications;
- Advocate holistic approach to building resilience among the population, especially through education that promotes critical thinking to enable citizens question negative religious teachings;
- Advocate security sector reforms that address injustices, human rights abuses and overt authoritarianism associated with defence and security agents, as well as enhance oversight and accountability;
- Promote national reconciliation and cohesion by governments on the continent, as well as inclusion the population in governance processes;
- Advocate good parenting as well as provision of good education for all from very early ages.



On Addressing Capacity Deficits for Integrated Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Africa, the AUC, RECs, Governments, TCEs, should leverage APSTA to:

- Increase the number of qualified professionals, experts and trainers through increased training courses;
- Increase and improve infrastructure for training through support for Training centres/institutions;
- Support and collaborate on development of curriculum and modules on training guided by the peculiar contexts of the regions across the continent;
- Provide in collaboration with Training Institutions, updated guidance frameworks for training;
- Support training institutions and research centres in efforts to raise funds for capacity building for the continent.

On Review of ASF Training Policy and Standards as well as Research on Peace and Security issues in Africa; the AUC, RECs, TCEs should leverage APSTA to:

- Integrate Training and Research Centres/Institutions into the policy development and review processes of the African Union;
- Institutionalize and render accessible, a database of official/authorized AU documentation to guide research and studies on peace and security on the continent;
- Rigorously pursue further research on conceptualization of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa

- Engage academic and technical expertise available at training and research centres/institutions across the continent;

On Standardisation/Harmonization of African Union/Regional Senior Mission Leadership Training Course; the AUC, RECs, TCEs should:

- Consider the merits of the recommendations from the review of the Regional Senior Mission Leadership Course conducted by APSTA in year 2020, in view of enhancing the delivery and outcomes of the Course.

On the Revised Memorandum of Understanding; AUC and APSTA should:

- Expand the scope of APSTA support to the AUC beyond the 2008 MoU based on ASF;
- Delimit APSTA support to the AUC within the peace and security scope of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA);
- Format the revised MoU in accordance with the new format prescribed by the AUC and available via the Personal Assistant at the Office of the CPAPS.

CONCLUSION

Radicalization and violent extremism are threats to Africa’s aspirations to ‘silencing the Guns’ and attaining ‘AU Agenda 2063’, as well as the ‘UN Agenda 2030’. Therefore, to effectively address these threats to the continent’s aspiration to peace and development, identified capacity deficits must be offset as matter of urgency.

