



Civil society engagement and a human security approach on countering violent extremism in Mali

Venue and date: 10 June at the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations. 666 Third Avenue, 19th Floor

Time: 9:15 till 10:15 AM

Purpose: The Sahel region has become one of the most challenging regions in sub-Saharan Africa because of the combined effects of conflict, insecurity, humanitarian, human rights and democratic challenges across the region. These challenges extend to Mali, where there is a desire to move forward stymied by a lack of strong institutions, dysfunctional judicial systems, lack of progress in fighting impunity, difficulties ensuring rule of law, lack of inclusiveness in political dialogue, social cohesion, and serious human security challenges.

The people in Mali and the Sahel region are the first people affected by this crisis. However, certain groups active in Mali have also been perceived to pose a threat to international security. A range of security interests play a role in the Sahel region, which makes it crucial to develop coherent and well informed development and security policies, with local people at the centre. This panel will strive to have a multi actor debate on the role of both the government and civil society in addressing violent extremism in Mali. This includes the reconciliation and transitional justice process but also more structural work on development, human rights and conflict prevention in Mali. In these processes, the Malian government, civil society and international actors play a crucial role. The panel will address the areas where civil society can engage to take an active role to contribute to curbing violent extremism. They will highlight the role of the youth, women and religious leaders and the conditions that enable or disenable their engagement on countering violent extremism. The panelists will share their thoughts on the implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) through practices from the Malian context. This debate is made possible with financial support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation, through their funded project: *Civil Society for a Human Security Strategy in Mali*. This project is an initiative of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and

the Human Security Collective (HSC). The project aims to bridge development, conflict mediation and security initiatives in Mali through a human security approach.¹

Host: Dutch Permanent Mission to the UN

Organizers:

WANEP: The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) is a leading Regional Peacebuilding organization with strong national networks in every Member State of ECOWAS. WANEP places special focus on collaborative approaches to conflict prevention, and peacebuilding, working with diverse actors from civil society, governments, intergovernmental bodies, women groups and other partners in a bid to establish a platform for dialogue, experience sharing and learning, thereby complementing efforts at ensuring sustainable peace and development in West Africa and beyond

Human Security Collective (HSC): HSC builds capacities of civil society in engaging policy discourses and policy makers on the effects of counter-terrorism measures on civil society's political and operational space. HSC is driven by the notion that security is too important to be left in the hands of states and military only. Since its inception, it has facilitated linkages between local communities and policymakers at the regional and international levels, and strengthened its engagements with the UN and EU to advocate for a human security approach to counter-terrorism, centering on the needs and capabilities of people in dealing with sources of threats.

GPPAC: The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a global network that connects civil society organizations (CSO's) engaged in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts on the ground, and advocates for such efforts in major policy hubs. Through 15 regional networks, GPPAC strives for multi-stakeholder partnerships with governments, regional organisations and the UN. GPPAC has spearheaded security dialogues between CSOs and regional organisations including the OAS, ECOWAS and ASEAN, and is furthering its work on human security. It provides a channel for local CSOs world-wide to inform the development and implementation of security strategies, including measures to address violent extremism, civil-military interventions, as well as the role of the UN in such initiatives.

Panellists and Structure

- Ambassador Mr. S.E.M. Sékou Kassé, Ambassador for Mali to the UN (TBC)
- Ms Oulie Keita - Director of Programs Freedom House, Board member of WANEP Mali
- Mr Moussa Bambara - Project Development and Conflict Management Specialist at the Governance team of USAID Mali

¹ For more information on the project, see:

http://www.wanep.org/wanep/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=534:wanep-mali-launches-human-security-project&catid=25:news-releases&Itemid=8

- Imam Diallo - Religious leader and President of the organization Association Malienne pour la Paix et le Salut (AMPS) (TBC)
- Moderator: Mr. Fulco van Deventer, deputy director, Human Security Collective

A delegate from the Dutch Mission will open and close the panel. The Ambassador for Mali to the UN, Mr. S.E.M. Sékou Kassé, will give a government perspective on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), national security and engagement with civil society on peace and conflict issues. Oulie Keita will give an introduction to civil society engagement in countering violent extremism in Mali. This is followed by a facilitated interview with the different panelists.

Brief background

Currently, Mali is in a transitional phase after the multidimensional crisis the country experienced in the years 2011-2013. Among others poverty, corruption, inter and intra community injustices and conflicts, historical separatism, religious extremism, lack of state presence and human rights, insecurity caused by bandits, but also by organized crime and the proliferation of arms play an important role. The crisis highlighted many structural problems of Mali and the region. These problems create an enabling environment for violent extremism.

Mali has a broadly developed civil society. Traditionally, Malian CSOs mainly focused their efforts on social services such as water and sanitation, health, education and agriculture. Very few dealt with the issues around peace and security. After the unprecedented crisis and in the current transitional period, a number of CSOs and donors aim to connect development and security objectives, with human security as a common ground.

After the French formally handed over their military operations at the end of last year, the current security frame in Mali is set by MINUSMA. This frame is temporary and during the mission the capacity of the security sector and rule of law in Mali is supposed to be built to such a level that it can sustain future national stability. The role of civil society is considered to be important in building and institutionalizing viable government and societal structures that serve the needs and capabilities of people in dealing with development challenges and threats. The mandate of MINUSMA is broad and seeks a constructive partnership with CSOs to build up security at community, provincial and national level.

The Ministry for National Reconciliation has initiated a national process of truth, justice and reconciliation. In all parts of the country dialogues will take place to find truth, to speak justice and to reconcile people with each other based on principles of truth and justice. Civil Society will play a profound role in facilitating dialogues between opposed groups, building trust and creating a collective understanding of truth and justice.

Although the situation in Mali might seem relatively stable today, also due to the international presence, addressing systemic causes of violence and extremism is strongly needed and might take a long time. The occupation in the North has left people with trauma's and feelings of hate, mistrust and misunderstanding. The governance issues in the North have not been addressed

properly by state authorities, and the divide between North and South is enormous. Criminal networks and Jihadist groups are keeping a strong influence in the border areas with Mauretania and Algeria. The proliferation of arms is substantial. Economic development in the North is a dire issue, opportunities for youth are lacking and large parts of the population remain internally displaced.

CSO networks in Mali are implementing a strategy to take up these core issues of human security with citizens and build the link with the National Government, ECOWAS, MINUSMA, the UN, the international community, and all other relevant players. As these organizations are driven and staffed by citizens from Mali and the West African region, they are the best positioned to work together with the Government on CVE.

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