

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates, Mr. Nasser Bourita, inaugurated on June 24, 2021, the headquarters of the United Nations Program Office for Counter-Terrorism and Training in Africa with the participation, by videoconference, of the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office (UNOCT), Mr. Vladimir Voronkov.

During the speech delivered on this occasion, Mr Bourita expressed his thanks to the UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio GUTERRES, for his support to this project and reiterate appreciation for all the achievements he has made, including in the particular area of counter-terrorism.

He stressed that the establishment of the Programme Office for Africa would not have been possible without the leadership of Mr. VORONKOV, and his continued support to African countries in their efforts to fight terrorism and violent extremism.

In addition, the Minister said that the establishment of this Programme Office for Africa in Rabat, Morocco, has more than one significance:

- First, it is an eloquent example of possible synergy between a Member State and the UN Secretariat to implement the UN global counter-terrorism strategy.
- Second, it shows that the operational action of training and sharing experiences and good practices is as important as the political commitment. Cooperation and coordination are indeed a fundamental basis for fighting a transnational phenomenon like terrorism.
- Third, it falls naturally within Morocco's vocation and engagement towards Africa under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. It confirms Morocco's role as a regional hub, provider of stability and security, in West-Africa and the Sahel in particular and in the continent as a whole.

Mr. Bourita also stressed that Morocco is therefore a natural host of the United Nations Office for Counterterrorism in Africa, and will assume This responsibility with honour and commitment.

The Minister added that the terrorist threat in Africa is worrying for more than one reason:

- No less than a decade ago, terrorism was considered an external (and extrinsic) threat to Africa. Nowadays, terrorism found a homeland in the continent.

- At a time when counterterrorism efforts were focused on other parts of the world, some were confident that most of African regions were immune from the spread of this scourge. Today, four major terrorist groups are established in Africa, with a dozen of affiliated groups, active in more than 25 African countries.
- The Continent is not only the new ground of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters, but it has also become a self-homeland for terrorists that perpetuated last year only, about 7,108 attacks that caused 12,519 victims.
- The Sahelo-Saharan region is becoming the second most affected area in the world by terrorism. In fact, 2020 was the deadliest year in terms of terrorist violence in the Sahel with a death toll of 4,250, an increase of 60% compared to 2019.
- The economic impact of terrorism in Africa over the past 10 years has amounted to 171 billion USD, including 13 billion USD for 2019. The economic cost of terrorist violence has been multiplied by nine since 2007.

The Minister also noted that the alarming evolution of terrorism in Africa requires national ownership and enhanced capacities, systematic coordination among Africans and substantial support from the international community. Africa deserves more than ever greater mobilisation and adapted support to its specific needs.

According to Mr. Bourita, the ambition of the Rabat Programme Office for Counterterrorism and Training in Africa, is to unite our efforts in order to deal with the complex and evolving terrorist threat, and more specifically, the Programme Office, as training Center, aims at strengthening the capacities of Member States through the development of National Training Programmes and Counter Terrorism training curricula, said Mr. Bourita.

Mr. Bourita also indicated that the Programme Office will provide a significant contribution to support African States in their fight against terrorism. Its main mission will consist in delivering immediate knowledge, skills and tools in the counter-terrorism related fields of border security, prison management, prevention, deradicalization and reintegration,

In this context, the Minister recalled that the priority is to ensure that the Programme Office activities are:

- perfectly in line with the needs of African states;
- complementary to the various initiatives launched by African states; and

- developed with the contribution of African States and shared amongst partners in a cooperative and solidarity-based approach.

The inauguration of the Programme Office for Africa, he said, comes at a particular juncture marked by increasing efforts to strengthen international cooperation on counter-terrorism priorities, and as a contributor to the security of the African continent and the development of its brotherly nations, Morocco will spare no efforts to support the Office objectives and activities.

Morocco reaffirms its commitment to share with African states the singular expertise of its counter-terrorism strategy, developed during more than two decades under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Minister concluded.