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## Summary report

# First Senior Regional Course for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) for West Africa Region

Accra, Ghana, 4-7 July 2022



Organized with the support of the Human Security Research Center - Ghana



<b>Table of contents</b>	
Note from the course directors	p.2
<b>I. Introduction</b>	p.3
<b>II. Course scope, methodology and resources</b>	p.3
<b>III. PVE course content</b>	p.4
<b>III. 1 The importance of understanding the causes of VE</b>	p.4
<b>III. 2 The need for PVE and its implementation</b>	p.6
<b>III. 3 The role of some stakeholders of the society in the PVE</b>	p.7
<b>III. 4 Values education and environmental governance,         neglected PVE drivers</b>	p.9
<b>IV. Conclusion</b>	p.9
Annex 1 – Useful references	p.10
Annex 2 – About the partners	p.11

### **Note from the course directors**

The course directors would like to thank all participants and resource persons for their invaluable contributions to this interactive course. However, they take full responsibility for any shortcomings and for transcribing the work in this report.

The African Union's ACSRT and the Swiss FDFA's PHRD would also like to express their deepest appreciation to the *Human Security Research Centre - Ghana*, which provided invaluable assistance in organizing this course in Accra, Ghana.

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## I. Introduction

The **Joint Training programme for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE)**, launched in 2019 by the Algiers-based African Union's African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), and the Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), is designed for Member States of the African Union. After two regional courses in Central Africa, **this first Senior Regional PVE Course for the West African Region was organized in Accra, Ghana**, firstly to take into account the linguistic balance prevailing in sub-Saharan Africa, and secondly because it responded to the invitation of the Ghanaian government and benefited from the logistical and intellectual support of the *Human Security Research Centre - Ghana (HSRCGh)* with which the two institutions have been cooperating for many years.

The development of these courses is in response to the growing concern of states about extreme violence in the region and the realization by their leaders that an approach that would complement the purely military and security based approach was necessary if peace was to be restored. As the weeks and months go by, the advances of the armed groups become more evident. The developments in Burkina Faso, not to mention those in Mali and Niger, which were discussed in detail in the various course modules, were particularly striking to participants, most of whom had little knowledge of the gravity of the situation. For those who have so far been spared this violence but are concerned about its threat to their country, **this programme is designed to integrate traditional security responses into a comprehensive approach that puts people at the centre of state concerns in all areas under the state's responsibility, whether security, political or social**. This participation is **based on dialogue, at all levels** of public management, be it local, regional or national. To this end, the PVE holds that all the components of society must be involved in the decisions that concern them, because the future of everyone is at stake. Extreme violence, which can vary enormously from one place or country to another, is a phenomenon that affects all of society. It is therefore society as a whole that must decide on the best ways to put an end to it and, at the same time, adopt the most appropriate ways to prevent it.

This joint training programme thus consists of a series of courses, both regional and national (the Accra course is the third regional course), and is designed to highlight the importance of preventing violence to reduce its consequences and prevent it from escalating to other areas. It seeks to explore the multiple causes of this extreme violence, highlight ways to reduce them, and enable the participating public, private and civil society leaders to build their capacity to effectively incorporate this PVE approach into their respective activities and responsibilities.

## II. Course scope, methodology and resources

The programme organized the first **PVE Regional Course for senior officials in the West African region** from 4-7 July 2022 in Accra, Ghana.

The course was opened by Ghana's Minister of National Security, who emphasized the "inadequacy of the measures taken so far" to combat VE and who, from the outset, put six questions to the participants: "Is the killing of VE leaders effective? Is the fight against cybercrime being waged properly? Should states negotiate with VEs? Do we have effective responses to the global climate crisis? What is being done to help Burkina Faso? And what is the role of political parties, especially those of the opposition?" He was followed in this momentum by the former UN SRSG for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas,

who asked everyone to invest personally and actively in PVE wherever they found themselves and "without waiting for national plans". These questions and calls were relayed by the three other speakers who opened the event, namely the Swiss Ambassador to Ghana, the Acting Director of ACSRT and the Representative of the Executive Director of HSRC-Ghana.

It was a vibrant introduction for the fifty or so high-level personalities from 14 countries in the West African region and the dozen or so specialists (resource persons) who accompanied them. Senior government officials, representatives of the defence and security forces (DSF), politicians, community leaders and local elected officials, members of civil society and researchers, all actively participated in the presentations and discussions that covered the **20 modules** of the course. These presentations and debates allowed participants to experience, through discussions and practical exercises, the full scope, complexity, and importance of the prevention approach. As with the other courses in the programme, these modules were divided into three main chapters: knowledge of VE drivers, PVE strength and tools, and the roles that each stakeholder is called upon to play in their own space.

This first regional course for West Africa is a sequel to two regional courses conducted in 2019 and 2022 for Central African countries. This report deliberately avoids delving into the scope (concept, issues, and objectives), methodology, resources, and organizers of this course as these elements were comprehensively presented in the report of the initial 2019 course<sup>1</sup> and are recurrent throughout the programme, which can be found in French and English on the African Union website.

### III. PVE course content

#### III. 1 The importance of understanding the causes of VE

The pressure of VE on the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea and, possibly, on those bordering the Atlantic to the West, compromises the political equilibrium in each country. This fear, combined with the experiences of those who are already witnessing this pressure at home, lends considerable credence to a deeper understanding of the causes of this violence. The example of Burkina Faso, which was analysed and discussed in detail throughout the course, was a major concern for participants, because what is happening there is still not well understood in the region. **The media only shows raw images of the violence without providing any background.** It was therefore crucial for participants to **understand** the mechanisms behind the expansion of areas controlled by armed groups, the language used to lure populations away from traditional administrative and state systems, recruitment techniques, and the geographic, political and financial strategies of the two major jihadist movements that occupy the Sahel.

These concerns were compounded by questions about the **financial sources** of the movements, the routes of the multiple **traffics** used by the violent extremists, and those used for the **circulation of weapons**, as well as the dynamics of exploitation of the **subsoil** and the protected

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<sup>1</sup> Rapport du Cours Afrique centrale de 2019 (Yaoundé) : [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39274-doc-rapport\\_synthese\\_fr.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39274-doc-rapport_synthese_fr.pdf) ; Report of the 2019 Central Africa Course (Yaounde): [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39274-doc-summary\\_report\\_1.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39274-doc-summary_report_1.pdf) . Voir aussi : Rapport du Cours Afrique centrale de 2022 (Libreville) : [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42136-doc-Cours\\_regional\\_PEV\\_CEEAC\\_28-31.03.2022\\_Rapport\\_synthese\\_v.2022\\_04\\_25\\_FINAL\\_F.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42136-doc-Cours_regional_PEV_CEEAC_28-31.03.2022_Rapport_synthese_v.2022_04_25_FINAL_F.pdf) ; Report of the 2022 Central Africa Course (Libreville): [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42136-doc-Cours\\_regional\\_PEV\\_CEEAC\\_28-31.03.2022\\_Rapport\\_synthese\\_v.2022\\_04\\_25\\_FINAL\\_E-1.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/42136-doc-Cours_regional_PEV_CEEAC_28-31.03.2022_Rapport_synthese_v.2022_04_25_FINAL_E-1.pdf)

areas. Particularly impressive was a description of the origin of the weapons, 50% of which came from the local DSF, which raised questions about the mismanagement of government forces' arsenals and corruption as key reasons behind the success of VE groups.

Particular emphasis was also placed on **inter-state cooperation** and the challenges faced by states in coordinating their security policies and responses. Accra, the birthplace of the initiative that bears the same name, was the right place to talk about it. The initiative, which is authorized by the ECOWAS statutes and which responds to obvious needs for independence from foreign funding, nevertheless highlights the obstacles encountered by states with such different linguistic, political, social and security cultures in coordinating and understanding each other. In addition, there is a lack of practice in assisting other states when they are in danger. The risk of considering VE threats as distant also undermines concrete exchanges on regional responses to this issue.

With regard to the **political causes of VE**, heated debates highlighted government shortcomings in managing political, economic and community power, dealing with minorities, and ensuring a fair distribution of resources among central, regional and local authorities. It was demonstrated that the credibility of political and power bodies, which was already faltering before the advent of VE, tends to crumble under the blows of the latter. This poses a serious problem of social cohesion for populations who have no bearings other than those offered by armed groups. The proliferation of militias and self-defence groups is a direct consequence, with all the disruptions we are unfortunately witnessing today. In addition to this restructuring of the balance of power within states affected by VE, there is a concurrent collapse of the judicial system, which is nothing new. The latter is incapable of establishing solid safeguards against widespread corruption and impunity that are rampant in many states. These benefit those who, against any national interest, take advantage of the reality of VE either to cooperate with them or to engage in important contracts related to defence, food and the survival of displaced populations. This misconduct was widely cited by participants as a major cause of the rise of VE groups.

The **crisis** faced by today's **youth** and their involvement in armed groups of all types, including the security companies that abound in West Africa, was widely mentioned. Intergenerational pressure is breaking down family and political structures. Not only do young people no longer trust their elders, but they blame them for backward-looking attitudes in an effort to preserve their power. Today, the DSF have to contend with protest movements of unexpected magnitude. This call to question affects all countries in the region. Everyone is well aware of this, but responses are taking time to be put in place and their absence only increases the risk of violence.

If the causes of VE are beginning to be better understood, if discussions such as those that took place during the course were possible, it is above all because many **researchers and academics** have scientifically examined the **sociology of violence**, the political underpinnings of the growth of VE, and the hidden aspects of the systems of economic and political domination that persist in societies where democratic debate is restricted, where anathema is quick to be pronounced, and where checks and balances on power are lacking. It was clearly stated that "the political class, and to a greater extent the DSF, do not like researchers" and try to limit their investigations as they run the risk of exposing the truth in broad daylight. This is what makes research work so admirable, it was said, despite the cuts in budgets earmarked for research in the humanities and social sciences year after year, and despite the challenge of collecting data and the insecurity that researchers often face. This is despite the fact that if we want to understand VE and reduce its harmfulness, it is important to know its promoters (armed

groups as well as the various other actors of violence) and identify where and how to make them vulnerable or convert them to more humanity.

The **responsibility of governments and elected officials, whether national, regional or local**, in worsening the security and social situation in West Africa was extensively discussed. How can one be a citizen and yet be unable to actively participate in decisions that concern them? The promotion of political dialogue is an important aspect of community life. The crisis that West Africa is going through requires a much greater individual and collective commitment than what meets the eye. **"The failure and possible disappearance of the state is the responsibility of each and every one of us"**, was it said. A failed state is a state that no longer addresses the concerns of its people. When children can no longer go to school, mothers cannot feed their children, or young people cannot earn enough to live, then politicians are to blame. **"He that is down needs fear no fall"**, it was said. And it should not be surprising that the military takes over in such circumstances! But will they know better than the politicians how to manage the crisis or how to restore to the people their right to participate in decisions?

One of the main sources of frustration and anger among the population, which often leads to the involvement of young people in violent extremist groups, **is the use of the DSF at all difficult moments** in the life of states in the sub-continent. Military and police operations are, in fact, too often repressive and disrespectful of the needs and expectations of the populations. Therefore, a fundamentally different training should be given to the soldiers, an organization of the armed forces focused on supporting the population rather than exploiting it. While it was underscored that the civil-military activities of the DSF could refurbish a tainted image, **it was also proposed that military structures be used to strengthen citizenship**: military service should be compulsory for all, while ensuring that the monopoly of violence remains in the hands of the state and the circulation of arms is controlled in order to restrict their proliferation, a major cause of violence.

Young people who join armed extremist groups are motivated in many different ways. This represents some hope for prevention, **because a good understanding of these motivations could change the path of those who join, which is never linear**. The pull factors can range from personal or collective vengeance, to trauma related to the behaviour of civil servants or the "uniformed force", the lure of gain, the feeling of pride of belonging to a united and dynamic group, the religious, family or ethnic appeal or simply coercion. The need for protection and the search for justice were also mentioned. Understanding the motives for joining VE groups means understanding how to re-engage with these young people, allowing them to consider a possible return and, why not, mobilize them in PVE efforts.

In concluding this part of the course, the speakers and participants stressed the complexity of the VE phenomenon, the many reasons for this violence (both endogenous and exogenous), the permanent evolution of the composition and deployment of armed groups, the very diverse reactions of local populations to this violence and the reactions of States, which are still far from being proactive. It was also emphasized that VE fundamentally challenges the rule of law, the political structure, the social equilibrium, the ancestral traditions and habits and, in short, the existence and purpose of our States

### **III. 2 The need for PVE and its implementation**

Faced with this disorder and the "loss of identity" of individuals, which was widely discussed during the course, **PVE offers an approach of peace, social cohesion and especially security**

**to people.** This approach is based on the individual, their personality, their strength and their intelligence, and touches on all aspects of social life. Nevertheless, the PVE concept is still difficult to grasp. Should there not be specific communication about the importance of its implementation? Should specific institutions be in charge of its dissemination? PVE strategies and action plans exist in many countries; why are they not known? Who is responsible for implementing them and educating people?

In response, **the importance of dialogue as an essential element of prevention** was emphasized throughout the course. Although it is an integral part of African culture, it was noted that dialogue is often missing in our daily lives. Dialogue is also indispensable in the political arena. Its absence leads to exclusion, frustration, hatred and conflicts. **It is a whole process of reclaiming peaceful relations between individuals, between institutions and between countries that must be carried out.** The idea that conflict can be resolved without violence by listening to the other's point of view and by freely consenting to compromise must be promoted in our societies. This idea must also govern the numerous dialogues that are conducted with VE. According to the participants, the State cannot be built against society and society always has the capacity to integrate innovations and new thoughts. These were the conclusions of the working groups that dealt with this topic.

In concrete terms and at the international level, the **United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006)** and the **UN Secretary General's Action Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (2016)** are the pillars of the prevention approach. The backbone of all the national and regional PVE strategies approved since then by States is based on these texts. But if these strategies do exist on paper, the **urgent need for PVE** does not seem to have been understood or, a fortiori, integrated into public policies. However, violence, regardless of the type, now goes far beyond the VE sphere. The populations are the first victims.

The course participants therefore examined **the role and responsibilities of everyone** in the implementation of effective PVE policies. Working from the principle that the populations are their primary beneficiaries, they reviewed the different stakeholders who are the most likely to facilitate this understanding of security shared by all, which is also referred to as **human security**. This is because it is a question of "our life", of life in society, and of peace, which is built every day. **PVE is a process.** Wars continue and collective security is often no longer assured, even though it is fundamental for the survival of populations. It is therefore necessary to take PVE out of the mere UN discourse and make it a political attitude of everyone.

### **III. 3 The role of some stakeholders of the society in the PVE**

The course continued with in-depth discussions on the categories of stakeholders that play a particular role in PVE promotion.

"The State is first of all the communities". With this observation, the responsibility is clearly established: **we are part of our community**, as are the customary and religious leaders, the local and national elected officials, the economic actors who support us, and the women, young people and men we live with. Surviving violence is a day-to-day common effort: the feeling of belonging to a protective social group is an invaluable comfort. The number of people joining armed groups is an indicator of the strength or absence of this feeling, a gauge of the value of the social contract that binds the individual to his community and the community to the state. Political, social or religious leaders are key to the strength of the community. When they play

the role of unifiers, it becomes easier to live together. However, they fail in their duties when they shirk their responsibilities, and put their personal interests above those of the people.

This was followed by an examination of the role of **women** in the PVE and their recognized role as pillars of their society. Unfortunately, women are too often excluded from the decisions that affect them directly, and they compensate for this by having a major influence in family life. While equality between men and women is not yet universal, its recognition will give renewed momentum to the PVE: as more women hold higher professional positions, the more life's most essential considerations will be addressed. This preventive work is already well underway by women's associations. It is important to support them because it is all about consolidating women's confidence in their power, focusing especially on rural women, who are often neglected, even though they are the strength and the future of a nation at peace

The **defence and security forces (DSF)**, which embody the state in its most concrete prerogatives, should be the bedrock of protection of the population. However, this is very often not the case. Sometimes the presence and actions of the DSF, through their abuses and extortion, push young people to join violent armed groups. **The presence of the DSF must therefore, according to the participants, be transformed into a far-reaching cooperation with all other actors concerned.** Dialogue with local leaders, PVE training for field officers, and media support are all necessities that must be integrated into DSF operations. It was highlighted that the DSF who are open to dialogue, communicate intelligently about their activities and presence, and act with respect for the population, greatly reduce the risks they themselves run, while helping to appease young people at risk of joining extremist groups.

Concerning the role of the **stakeholders in the justice system**, it was emphasized that PVE depends on the vision that people have of their own behaviour. What is our relationship with justice? Laxity as well as extreme strictness were immediately criticized. Does justice really promote bad behaviour over good behaviour? Why are the returnees given better treatment than the young people who stayed in the village? Impunity, political or financial dependence, or corruption are flaws that impair the wisdom of judgments. However, the role that the judicial stakeholders play in the crises that they are called upon to resolve is fundamental. The serenity of young people and the reduction of tensions in the communities depend on them.

As for **young people**, they are the backbone of extremist movements and other armed groups and militias. They are at the very centre of violence and at the same time caught up in intergenerational conflicts that can quickly spiral out of control. They call into question their sense of belonging to their communities and nations. At the same time, there are many who have committed themselves to society through cultural, social, civic, economic or political actions. They are key PVE stakeholders. If they are demanding their place in the decision-making bodies, it is because they are aware that their future is at stake. Turning a deaf ear and failing to actively integrate them into the decisions that concern them, even if it means disrupting certain habits, is a risk whose consequences are clearly visible.

Discussions on the role of the **media** in the PVE were both vibrant and complex. Their importance was fully acknowledged. But so was the diversity of their behaviour. Who should they reach? How should they do it? What images are they supposed to or can they broadcast? And how do they strike a balance between reporting, information and national security? If the "psychological" responsibility (for good or ill) of the media is well known, the power of the national body that controls them is still a matter of debate in all countries. Its ethics are varied but not sufficiently discussed. One thing is certain: **the media play a fundamental role in**

**advocating the importance of women's role in society.** It is for women, especially in the countryside, that community radio stations were developed. It is through them that women have been able to express themselves freely. All these are beneficial to the PVE.

### **III. 4 Values education and environmental governance, neglected PVE drivers**

**The education system** plays a vital role in crystallizing ideas, establishing peace of mind and socializing people. However, everywhere there is insufficient funding to support it. It is very unequal in different places and reaches only a limited number of children in many West African countries. The **role of the family**, as the central focus of education, is therefore crucial. This role must be revalued. The teaching of the values of peace and prevention of violence as well as that of dialogue and respect for others concerns both the family and the school system. These are values that are directly associated with the PVE.

**Environmental governance** is central to the PVE. Africa's raw materials are coveted by the whole world. VE groups take advantage of the tensions caused by unfair and non-inclusive land policies. They can be perceived by the populations as objective allies rather than predators, as people who know how to manage the distribution of natural resource revenues. Trafficking in these resources and poaching have certainly increased with the presence of VE, but this has also been of benefit to the populations. Gold is at the very heart of VE expansionist policies. These issues can be important elements for the PVE through dialogue that must be conducted within the States on their land policies, with the multinationals concerning the respect of the rights of local populations, with politicians on decentralization to be put in place for the benefit of the populations. Last but not least, dialogue on a change in fiscal policies that penalize small communities, generally those occupied by the VE groups.

### **IV. Conclusion**

This first regional course on the PVE for West African countries was yet another success for the ACSRT/African Union and the Swiss PHRD/FDFA PVE programme. The warm welcome extended by the numerous Ghanaian participants in the course contributed to this success. Although very intensive, the course was followed with unflagging interest. The format of the presentations, dialogues and discussions that interspersed the course confirmed the need for information and training that was at the origin of the programme. The only small hurdle encountered was that the bilingualism of the course split the participants into two distinct groups, each with their own dynamism, prompted by different cultural habits. Apart from this, feedback from participants was unanimous: the community of people who have become aware of the importance of PVE and its incorporation into public, professional and personal policies has grown. The dialogue will continue: it is the glue that binds this community of thought and practice.

## Annex 1 – Useful references

- **Plan d'action du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent (24 décembre 2015) / Plan of Action of the United Nations Secretary-General to Prevent Violent Extremism (24 December 2015)**  
Français : [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674&referer=/english/&Lang=F](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674&referer=/english/&Lang=F)  
English: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674)
- **1999 Convention de l'OUA sur la Prévention et la Lutte contre le Terrorisme / OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism /**  
Français : <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/algiers-convention-terrorism-fr.pdf>  
English: <https://caert.org.dz/official-documents/conventions/convention-terrorism.pdf>
- **2002 UA Plan d'action pour la prévention et la lutte contre le terrorisme / AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism**  
Français : [https://www.caert.org.dz/fr/AU-official-documents/plan\\_action\\_fr.pdf](https://www.caert.org.dz/fr/AU-official-documents/plan_action_fr.pdf)  
English: <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-anti-terrorism-plan-of-action.pdf>
- **2004 Protocole à la Convention de l'OUA sur la prévention et la lutte contre le terrorisme / Protocol to the 1999 AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism**  
Français : <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/protocole-lutte-contre-terrorisme-fr.pdf>  
English: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7787-treaty-0030\\_-\\_protocol\\_to\\_the\\_oau\\_convention\\_on\\_the\\_prevention\\_and\\_combating\\_of\\_terrorism\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7787-treaty-0030_-_protocol_to_the_oau_convention_on_the_prevention_and_combating_of_terrorism_e.pdf)
- **2014 Charte africaine des valeurs et des principes de la décentralisation, de la gouvernance locale et du développement local / African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development**  
Français : [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-treaty-0049\\_-\\_african\\_charter\\_on\\_the\\_values\\_and\\_principles\\_of\\_decentralisation\\_local\\_governance\\_and\\_local\\_development\\_f.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-treaty-0049_-_african_charter_on_the_values_and_principles_of_decentralisation_local_governance_and_local_development_f.pdf)  
English: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-treaty-0049\\_-\\_african\\_charter\\_on\\_the\\_values\\_and\\_principles\\_of\\_decentralisation\\_local\\_governance\\_and\\_local\\_development\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36387-treaty-0049_-_african_charter_on_the_values_and_principles_of_decentralisation_local_governance_and_local_development_e.pdf)
- **2014 Rapport de la Présidence de la Commission sur le terrorisme et l'extrémisme violent en Afrique / Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa**  
Français : [https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-cps.455.rpt\\_terrorisme.nairobi.2-09-2014-2-0.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-cps.455.rpt_terrorisme.nairobi.2-09-2014-2-0.pdf)  
English: [https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-psc-rpt-terrorism-nairobi-2-09-2014-pdf\\_0.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/speeches/25397-sp-psc-rpt-terrorism-nairobi-2-09-2014-pdf_0.pdf)
- **Plan d'action de politique étrangère pour la prévention de l'extrémisme violent du Département fédéral des affaires étrangères (DFAE) de Suisse (avril 2016) / Switzerland's Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism (April 2016)**  
Français : [https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/fr/documents/publications/SchweizerischeAussenpolitik/Aussenpolitischer-Aktionsplan-PVE160404\\_FR.pdf](https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/fr/documents/publications/SchweizerischeAussenpolitik/Aussenpolitischer-Aktionsplan-PVE160404_FR.pdf)  
English: <http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/43587.pdf>

## Annex 2: About the partners

### The African Union, its reference framework and the ACSRT

The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was set up, as a structure of the African Union Commission, in accordance with the provisions set out in section H, paragraphs 19 to 21 of the AU Plan of Action for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa (2002). Upon its establishment, the objectives were to assist African countries in building and strengthening their capacity to prevent and combat terrorism, to act as a watchdog and warning tool, and to complement international action by strengthening cooperation among African countries in these areas. Subsequent decisions by AU political bodies expanded this mandate to the prevention and fight against violent extremism.

The AU Commission, through the ACSRT, strives to:

- build the capacity of States to prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism, (strategies and POAs, training, advice...);
- promote better institutional interaction and coordination at the national and regional levels and better development of the Early Warning Mechanism;
- work towards improving the political and legal framework for the prevention and fight against terrorism and violent extremism;
- conduct and promote research on terrorism and violent extremism issues.

By promoting a multidimensional approach, based on the concept of "Human Security" to eradicate VE and terrorism in the Member States of the African Union, this course is consistent with the mandate of the ACSRT.

### The Swiss FDFA's PVE programme

Following the adoption of the United Nations Plan of Action for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (2016), the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) made this topic a priority (\*). The Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) is the FDFA's centre of competence that implements its priorities in the areas of peace and human security.

It launched a PVE programme as early as 2016, which has since undertaken a range of advocacy, dialogue and training activities in support of this prevention approach that focuses on the causes of violence and the alternatives that can be provided. It also mobilizes its experts to carry out activities with its partners in the field.

This initiative has held some forty meetings, which have brought together some 2000 people from various professional backgrounds in North, West and Central Africa.

The objective is to provide an informal space for multi-stakeholder dialogue on the prevention approach, to highlight and strengthen positive initiatives that offer concrete alternatives to VE, and to help build the capacities of PVE stakeholders in their jobs and in their communities

**The African Union's ACSRT is a partner in the initiative and has partnered with the Swiss FDFA to launch this joint PVE training programme.**

(\* The Swiss FDFA adopted a Foreign Policy Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism in April 2016 – see <http://www.news.admin.ch/NSBSubscriber/message/attachments/43587.pdf>)

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Specialized Technical and representational Agencies

African Centre for the Studies and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)

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2022-07

# First Senior Regional Course for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) for West Africa Region Accra, Ghana

ACSRT & Swiss Confederation

ACSRT & Swiss Confederation

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