



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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DURING THE SECOND NAIROBI CAUCUS

**Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Practitioners,**

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to join you for this Second Nairobi Caucus which seeks to confront the timely question of how we can prevent terrorist organisations from exploiting the rapid advancement in technology and communication, to advance their operational and strategic goals.

This subject is being engaged at the right forum, this Caucus, whose creation was inspired by the need for an adaptive, agile and innovative framework of collaboration that anchors collective efforts, that nourishes strong solidarity for a common purpose that keeps us, both individually and collectively, ahead of the curve in dealing with a dynamic threat - in the form of terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Last week, I had occasion to be part of the Annual Aspen Security Forum, which rightfully focused huge attention on Artificial intelligence, cyber warfare and security. There is no doubt that our world is being shaped today, and will be driven in the future by technology - which is going to impact in a profound way the manner in which life of individuals, families, societies including their development trajectory will evolve. No facet of society is being spared from the impact of the innovations that are upon us.

The fusion of technological advances that characterise the 4th industrial revolution including artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, Web3, blockchain, 3D printing, genetic engineering, quantum computing, machine learning among others are fundamentally transforming how we live and interact with each other.

Critical to this is the invisibility of the world we are entering. In this regard, online spaces and the gifts of technology are global commons, for which we have a collective responsibility to advance and protect especially from the persistent, evolving and geographically diffuse threat of terrorism.

These shocks are being intensely felt in the security sector and more so among counter terrorism practitioners. New technological advancements are powerful tools in the fight against terrorism and have significantly enhanced our abilities to degrade the threat. However, the same tools have been effectively deployed by terrorists and violent extremists, extending their reach, and amplifying their abilities in a manner unrestrained by laws, morals or ethics.

The internet including the dark web, all social media platforms, digital payment facilities, virtual assets, web hosting, cloud, archiving and file sharing services as well as unmanned vehicles have been adopted to facilitate a wide range of terrorist activities. Recently, this list has grown to include gaming and augmented reality.

Alarm bells are also being sounded about AI. As artificial intelligence becomes more accessible with lowered barriers to entry, it shall become an essential instrument in the "jihadi" toolkit. Much of how this shall transform the threat landscape is unclear and requiring further introspection; what is discernible however is that AI shall be a force multiplier for terrorist organisations. We are particularly concerned about the prospect of AI being used to aggregate and deploy other technologies. We are also alive to the pressure we will have to endure in adapting to a rapidly evolving environment where there is greater innovation in threat generation and our solutions become obsolete in a matter of weeks.

Underscoring this in his latest books the Age of AI, Henry Kissinger notes that AI will make profound changes in to manner in which we understand knowledge and how we make choices.

Friends,

Even as we project further down the road, we still have to contend with the pressing and manifest challenge of terrorism exploiting communication particularly the continued spread of terrorist content in social media platforms. Terrorist propaganda, disinformation, incitement and recruitment in online spaces remains rife and is often unchallenged or unmoderated.

The online space is today the world's largest ungoverned space. We are paying for this predicament in lives and livelihoods.

There is urgent need for measures to moderate terrorist content online that offer legal clarity on the obligations of infrastructure and service providers as well as other technology companies. Further, such measures need to provide a common criterion for determining designated, proscribed, dissolved, or banned organisations as well as clarity on what constitutes terrorist content and recommendations on how to adjudicate it.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The threat picture is more pronounced if you weigh these challenges against the somewhat inadequate ability and resolve of governments and multilateral institutions to respond with effective collective action.

As we are all aware, the trends of the recent past have put enormous pressure on governments and societies. The COVID-19 pandemic, the economic downturn, the war on Ukraine and a deepening climate crisis, have all combined to create significant pressure on governments. We are witness to high inflation, and growing costs of living, low productivity, etc. The essence of this has been the shrinking of government capacity to focus attention on development and provision of services to citizens, in the case of disasters and emergencies, governments have been forced divert development financing to crisis response. The sum total of this has been increased fragility - which is manifesting in weaker capacity to administer territories and provide services effectively.

The picture is worrisome because governments are unable to draw on the solidarity given by multilateral frameworks. From the regional to the UN level, multilateral agencies are assessed to be getting weaker and increasingly unable to mobilise solidarity. This global order is in a state of flux as arrangements designed to underwrite international peace and security are becoming increasingly held hostage and therefore becoming ineffectual. Today the greatest weakness even at the UNSC is the failure to build consensus even in the most critical international agenda or issues. The resultant polarization has been the retreat into narrow nationalist positions, greater polarisation of great powers and increasing the focus on national interests. Critical global risks and vulnerabilities are falling off the radar of priority lists. At the just concluded Aspen Security Forum, there was not a single session on Terrorism or its related issues such as extremism or terrorist financing, piracy etc. On the other hand, threats to international peace, especially terrorist groups have acquired a level

of endurance, resilience and an ability to regenerate that has seemingly drained resources and extended global capabilities and resolve.

I do not intend to paint a hopeless scenario, rather, I am making the argument that this bleak state of affairs can be the foundation for a fresh start. The seemingly intractable challenges to peace and security that confront us today are an opportunity to introspect, our differences are an opportunity to negotiate innovative arrangements that accommodate each other, our present concerns can inspire us to embrace a bold new vision that secures peace and prosperity for the present and future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All indicators confirm that terrorism is today capitalising on shifting global priorities and exploiting synergised vulnerabilities including new technologies, the climate crisis, growing fragilities, pandemics, conflict as well as other factors to consolidate and expand.

So how do we proceed as a region to confront these challenges that are today entrenching in our continent? I wish to proposition five considerations:

1. First, it is imperative that we maintain emphasis in addressing the root causes. The primary drivers of radicalisation will be a youthful population deprived of education, gainful employment and a political voice. Others include conflict, poverty, inequality, the climate crisis, uncontrolled arms, un-governed spaces including online spaces, injustice and bad governance. Our domestic responses to these root causes need to be inclusive,

participatory, and localised. Violent extremism conducive to terrorism seeks to exploit local grievances and is usually highly targeted. It is imperative therefore that solutions to counter and prevent violent extremism including those seeking to address online manifestations be locally inspired and community led.

2. Second, we must focus on improving governance. We know that democracy is under undue stress, and we have seen populism surge across the world. Across the world, democracy has come under stress. On our continent, we have seen this translate into unconstitutional changes of government and crisis and conflict, with undesirable results in terms of people suffering, violence and some cases accentuating violence against women and girls. In this regard, we must take all measures to nurture democratic practice, ensure inclusion, enhance people participation and service provision.
3. Third, we must strengthen regional and multilateral frameworks of collaboration including this Caucus. Terrorism exploits the fractures, tensions and differences present in our community of nations. This threat would be considerably contained if we collectively affirm multilateralism as our common shield against terrorism. Our inaction in evolving new frameworks to regulate and plug gaps being exploited by terrorist organisations in their exploitation of technology and communication is a global vulnerability. It is imperative that the international community finds the resolve and determination to prioritise the fight against terrorism including measures to regulate

online spaces and access to high-risk technologies. Failure in this regard is being more acutely felt in Africa.

4. Fourth, it is also necessary that we consistently invest in understanding how this threat is mutating by investing in research and other knowledge products. We are all on a very steep learning curve because our enemy is resilient, innovative and highly adaptive. To fully appreciate how terrorists shall exploit technology and communication now and, in the future, we must be nimble and informed in how we perceive the threat and how we equally leverage on new technologies to respond to it.
5. Fifth, and closely related to this is the need to evolve a domestic policy and legal framework that is versatile and effectual. Our response must be anchored on rule of law which is what contrasts us from the violent utopia terrorists seek to create and which reaffirms our shared values, common aspirations and enduring commitment to a just and peaceful world. It is imperative that we create these policy and legal frameworks which mark a first victory in the fight against terrorist exploitation of technology and communication.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to recognise and celebrate the active and growing participation of countries from the region in the Nairobi Caucus. Much is said about Africa becoming the epicentre of jihadist activity, it is therefore gratifying to see so many African Heads of Counter Terrorism agencies from Botswana, DRC, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia,

Zimbabwe, the EAC and SADC gather to generate solutions that are African led and African inspired and which for the most part become global best practice.

Thank you for gathering again in Nairobi - to reflect and map the way forward together.

I also acknowledge the collaboration of our international partners including China, India, Jordan, Korea, Slovakia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States as well as our friends from the Aqaba Process, the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh, the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, the Global Network on Extremism and Technology and the United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism. We value your partnership and friendship.

My final task is a most pleasant one: to officiate the formal launch of the Caucus. Our first Caucus last year was a proof of concept, and I am sure you would agree that this forum effectively responds to the need for a platform to rally all stakeholders in considering sound, context inspired solutions to the challenge of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

I am therefore delighted to present to you, the Caucus logo and entrust it to the heads of counter terrorism agencies in our region.

Asanteni sana.