



EMERGING SECURITY THREATS IN AFRICA

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KEY EVENTS

On November 25, 2022, the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies (CASIS) Vancouver hosted the fifth panel, Cyber Resilience and International Perspective, of the annual CASIS West Coast Security Conference. The panel featured His Excellency the Prime Minister Dr. Anatole Collinet Makosso, a Congolese scholar, writer, researcher, and politician, who presented on *Emerging Security Threats in Africa*.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso examined three emerging threats affecting Africa's security landscape: terrorism, drug trafficking, and climate change. The presentation highlighted that these emerging security threats should not be seen as being specific to Africa, but as global threats. Therefore, the subsequent discussion centered around initiatives and efforts planned to address these emerging security threats and promote cross-regional cooperation.

BACKGROUND

Although Africa has experienced a series of notorious attacks in the 1980s and the 1990s, including the bombing of UTA Flight 772, and the simultaneous attacks against the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso argued that it was in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks that terrorism in Africa took on new and unexpected forms. Hostage-taking incidents are becoming increasingly common throughout the continent "expressing terrorist fervour fueled by a mix of grievances, organized crime, and the pursuit of power".

Alongside all these attacks are the actions of the Islamic terrorist organization Boko Haram, specifically targeting secondary and elementary schools that offer an education deemed to be pro-Western. These attacks, such as the one in Chibok in Nigeria in April 2014, included the kidnapping and killing of high school girls. Furthermore, the permeability of borders and the fall of the Gaddafi regime in Libya have arguably resulted in violent extremism throughout West Africa and the collapse of several stable regimes.

His Excellency the Prime Minister, Dr. Collinet Makosso suggested that there is an increasingly clear link between drug trafficking and terrorist groups, particularly on the use of the proceeds of the illicit drug trade to finance terrorist activities. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has highlighted West Africa's increasing role as a transit point for cocaine produced in South America and consumed in Europe. In 2008, for instance, 27% of the drugs consumed in Europe passed through West Africa. It appears that some of the cocaine arriving in Europe continues to flow through the region.

Finally, on climate change, His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso claimed that Africa is plagued by environmental tensions that date back centuries, massive population displacements, conflicts, famines, epidemics, and floods. Most of the continent's ecosystems seem fragile; easily disturbed by human activity and minor temperature changes. This environmental threat will probably make it even more challenging for African governments and their international partners to manage economic development and sedentarization. Therefore, a failure to mitigate climate change could threaten and destabilize already vulnerable regions.

His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso focused on actions and efforts planned to address the emerging security threats described above, as well as the regional and international measures to contain these threats.

In fact, in 2005, the Republic of the Congo, through its President, His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, proposed a pan-African Common Defence Pact ratified by the African Union to preserve peace, prevent situations of state collapse, and create standby forces in five areas that subdivide the African continent. Additionally, a report by the General Secretariat of the United Nations has recommended measures aimed at eliminating the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. These prioritize the peaceful resolution of conflicts by tackling the situations exploited by terrorists, such as poverty, irredentism, and struggles for rights and freedoms.

Echoing a statement by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, his Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso maintained that peaceful settlements must therefore be prioritized since “[...] terrorism cannot be won over by military action. [...] We must address [its] root causes”. These are often deep feelings of “real” or “perceived” economic, political, social, or religious injustice.

His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso considered that diplomacy could be an effective tool for African governments in the fight against drug trafficking. Drug seizures in Sierra Leone and Togo, for instance, have sometimes required diplomatic efforts to ensure that suspects were properly apprehended by local authorities. The responses formulated in the African Union’s Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention 2019-2023 reflect the African Common position adopted at the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem. The overall objective of this action plan is to improve the health, security, and socio-economic well-being of African populations by addressing drug trafficking and substance abuse, including preventing the use of narcotics.

Finally, his Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso considered that strong actions and solidarity are needed in the fight against climate change, especially after the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP) held in Egypt in November 2022. COP 27 allowed world leaders, scientific experts, civil society members and United Nations representatives to reflect on how to ensure that Member States strengthen their national commitments for 2030.

His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Collinet Makosso concluded the presentation by reiterating that to meet the challenges posed by emerging security threats in Africa and today's geopolitical shifts, African countries must have the capacity to strengthen resilience against these threats and work together, in active solidarity, with other countries. This might constitute a significant step toward achieving a peaceful and secure Africa. However, as stated by the African Union in its Agenda 2063, it remains essential to understand first that these emerging security threats are part of a “social fact” within which we can distinguish a whole range of structural weaknesses that affect the continent. Therefore, His Excellency Prime Minister Dr. Anatole Collinet Makosso highlighted the importance of strengthening multilateralism and investing in global development as this could increase the stability of states and the well-being of the planet’s 7 billion inhabitants, and above all, “protect the billion inhabitants of Africa, the cradle of humanity”.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- Failure of climate change adaptation and mitigation is likely to exacerbate social and economic inequalities in many countries in Africa as climate change might negatively impact human security and socio-economic development.
- The threats posed by terrorism, drug trafficking, and climate change in Africa demands a cooperative approach, and a strong commitment to multilateralism; addressing collectively Africa's emerging threats may therefore be crucial to ensure international stability and security.
- Trigger factors of terrorism may be attributed to perceptions of economic deprivation, inequality, and social exclusion; therefore, the fight against terrorism ideologies could be achieved by addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.



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