
Public Roundtable

On the margins of the 7th International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa



Forum International de Dakar
sur la Paix et la Sécurité en Afrique
Dakar International Forum
on Peace and Security in Africa

“Population and Prevention of Violent Extremism: Towards a New Dynamic for the DFS Mandate?”

Tuesday, December 07, 2021, 1 :00 pm - 2 :45 pm

Abdou Diouf International Conference Center (CICAD)
Diamniadio, Dakar

S Y N T H E S I S

The Center for Advanced Defense and Security Studies (CHEDS) of Senegal and the Peace and Human Rights Division of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), long-time partners, organized one of the three roundtables held on the margins of the Dakar Forum 2021 on Peace and Security in Africa.

More than a hundred people took part, driven by their interest to discuss **the need to strengthen positive relations between the population and the defense and security forces (DSF) through the instrument of prevention of violent extremism (PVE)**. Under the chairmanship of the Director General of CHEDS, **Brigadier General Mbaye Cissé**, accompanied by the **Swiss Ambassador, Mr. Andrea Semadeni**, the speakers answered the question: *"How can the DSF, direct actors of security, strengthen their role as "peacemakers?"* (Gen. Cissé).

In their introductory remarks, General Cissé and Ambassador Semadeni emphasized that **the scope of the DSF's mandate, the knowledge that the DSF and the population have of it, and the manner in which it is implemented, are crucial to a peaceful relationship between communities and the DSF**. The latter cannot, by a purely security response, curb extreme violence, since it is a matter of contributing to the "human security" of the women and men in their care. **The roundtable called for a fundamental reflection on the very meaning of this mandate**. The DSF are decisive in enabling a dynamic social life that responds to the needs of all and in **creating those alliances of peace** that

States and populations need so much: they must therefore be trained accordingly. Their mandate should evolve to make them the central element of the human security of the populations, by resorting to **dialogue as a fundamental instrument of governance of public affairs**. It is basically a question of *"giving or restoring a place to everyone - including, why not, those who have passed over to the other side, but who nonetheless remain citizens of our world and who question us about this world."* (Amb. Semadeni).

For **General Amèyi Célestin Guidimey** (Vice President of the Presidential Committee for the Control of National Territory Security Missions), from **Benin**, it is important that the **coastal States of the Gulf of Guinea take advantage of the lessons learned from the situation in the Sahel; they should not minimize their internal fragility**, due in part to the abuses of the States and their representatives, incidents between farmers and herders, land conflicts and electoral violence. The State of Benin, aware of the limits of the all-security approach and the need to treat the causes of VE and not just its symptoms, has taken a number of measures since 2012. These include the creation of the Beninese Agency for Integrated Border Management (ABÉGIEF) in 2012, the Republican Police in 2018, the High Level Committee in charge of PVE and the fight against border insecurity in 2019, the Presidential Committee for External Inspection of the DSF and the National Guard in 2020. General Guidimey sees **ten measures to be taken to strengthen the role of the DSF in the PVE**: i. clearly include the PVE and new threats in the DFS's remit, ii. integrate the PVE into the DFS's training curricula, iii. improve territorial networking to strengthen the proximity of the DSF to the population, iv. adopt new modes of action for the DSF, which are too statocentric, with communities, v. create operational PVE focal points in each unit, vi. review the form and philosophy of civil-military actions, which should be more numerous and regular, vii. train the DSF to co-produce security with elected officials, the population, and in particular the youth of their home territory, viii. eradicate abuses against the population within the DSF, ix. fight against abuses by prison personnel, x. provide the DSF surveillance services with sufficient independence and resources. In conclusion, General Guidimey stated: *"The DSF have a leading role to play in the PVE because they are in daily contact with the populations; they are thus able to identify the causes and weak signals at the local level, to act or to propose adapted solutions. To this end, they must be restructured, assigned and trained in PVE."*

For **Colonel Major Mahamadou Magagi** (Director of the National Center for Strategic and Security Studies CNESS), from **Niger**, the PVE is essential for the security and stability of our countries and the social peace of their populations. The DSF have certainly contributed for a long time to the PVE without naming it and without saying so, through civil-military actions, support to humanitarian operations, search and rescue actions and participation in development actions, all of which contribute to reducing the vulnerability of the populations. In some cases, and especially in areas far from decision-making centers, they are the only public services deployed to the population. Despite this, in the minds of most citizens and even some decision-makers, the DSF are perceived only as forces of repression and intervention. **Recognizing a role for the DSF in the PVE will require significant changes in doctrine, training, equipment, and deployment. Local and regional military task forces should be trained for this purpose and supported by a PVE office within the headquarters.** This will require exemplary coordination of all the services responsible for PVE. But it is only under these conditions that the return of mutual trust and a PVE action can be realized. For CM Magagi, *"we assume that in many cases there will be political will to initiate the necessary reforms. But to carry them out successfully will require vision and political courage, as there will be difficulties and resistance throughout the process. Hence the need to clearly assign a PVE role to the DSF in public security policies and in national and regional PVE strategies."*

It was then up to **Ms. Madeleine Memb** (coordinator of MediaWomen4Peace), from **Cameroon**, to bring a female voice, based on her field experience with women in the Far North of Cameroon, victims of violence from violent extremists but also often of bad behavior from the DFS. Taking up the recent history of relations between the population and the DFS, she showed how much of Boko Haram's hold can be explained by this "human insecurity" stemming from poor State governance and the resulting mistrust. But today, the relative calm that has returned opens up other perspectives for the restoration of a more secure environment, which requires rebuilding on more consensual bases. Therefore, for the speaker, there is an urgent need to improve the image of the DFS. To this end, **communication and dialogue should be used as tools to rehabilitate the "big army"**. The use of social media and community networks to bring it closer to the people and to allow them to express themselves openly on their concerns is a necessity. It will facilitate a better understanding of the environment in which the DFS act, allow them communicate on their role and on the benefits of the civil-military actions for which they are responsible, and to find allies that will allow them to better ensure their security task. In conclusion, for Mrs. Memb, *"The spirit of defense should raise the question of the representativeness of the Armed Forces as a model of the values of the Republic and of collective commitment. This spirit should make prevail the forms of living together and the commitment of the national community"*.

Finally, **Colonel Major Ousmane Traoré** (Director of Institutional Development and Innovation of the Ministry of National Defense and Veterans), from **Burkina Faso**, showed the limits of DSF interventions in the fight against VE, the urgency of involving all components of society in this effort and insisted on the importance of the relationship of trust that must bind populations and DSF. To do this, **the DSF must accept to undergo a profound change** by increasing civil-military actions, to professionalize in order to avoid too frequent abuses, **to turn resolutely towards the PVE**, to respect the notion of gender, and **to provoke, wherever possible, an open and "humble" dialogue with all those, civilians and military, who are engaged, as they are, in securing the population**. Strengthening the frameworks for dialogue between the population and the DSF, particularly in conflict areas, is essential. To this end, it is necessary that the army-nation link becomes a national priority and is strongly supported by a clear political will to form a solid government-DSF-population nexus. The speaker concluded by emphasizing that *"dialogue is essential in this dynamic as an essential and transversal tool throughout the process. It calls for the actors of the communication to be transformed in their being, in all freedom. It requires active listening, sincere humility and mutual respect; it takes into account all the actors or groups of actors concerned and it adapts to their concerns"*.

The debate that followed showed the **urgency** of addressing the issue of the place of the PVE within the DSF. Adequate training, creation of special units, transformation of the notion of army-nation, open dialogues with civil society and the population, and an end to impunity were proposed by the participants. The roundtable ended with **a vibrant plea from the Director General of CHEDS for the DSF to adopt a profoundly republican attitude and also for an active continuation of the Regional Conversations for the PVE launched by Switzerland**.

Program 7.12.2021

1 :00 – 1 :15 pm	Welcome and Installation
1 :15 – 1 :25 pm	<p>Welcome remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Mbaye CISSE, Director General of the Center for Advanced Defense and Security Studies (CHEDS) of Senegal (Moderator of the panel) • H.E. Mr. Andrea SEMADENI, Ambassador of Switzerland to Senegal
1 :25 – 2 :10 pm	<p>Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Général Améyi Célestin GUIDIMEY, Security Consultant; Vice President of the Presidential Committee for the Control of National Territory Security Missions, Benin • Colonel Major Mahamadou Seidou MAGAGI, Director of the National Center for Strategic and Security Studies (CNESS); Niger • Madeleine MEMB, Coordinator, MediaWomen4Peace, Cameroon • Colonel Major Ousmane TRAORE, Director of Institutional Development and Innovation, Ministry of National Defense and Veterans, Burkina Faso
2 :10 – 2 :35 pm	Exchanges / debates
2 :35 – 2 :45 pm	Closing remarks of the Moderator



