

**Remarks Prepared for Delivery**

**Opening Ceremony  
Security and Development in Countering Violent Extremism in the Sahel**

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Dakar, Senegal**

H.E. Pathé Seck, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Senegal;

Ambassador Lewis Lukens, United States Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal;

Ambassador Ould-Abdallah, President of the Center for Strategy and Security in the Sahel Sahara

Members of the Government of the Republic of Senegal;  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;  
Members of the Military Attaché Corps in Dakar;  
Members of the ACSS Community Chapter in Senegal;  
Senior officers, participants, and guests;  
All protocols observed—

Good morning and welcome to Dakar, Senegal and the “Security and Development in Countering Violent Extremism in the Sahel” workshop. I am Mike Garrison, the Acting Director of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, located at the National Defense University in Washington DC. On behalf of the Secretary of Defense and the faculty and staff of the Africa Center, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this very important program.

This seminar attests to the breadth of security challenges and responses in Africa generally, and in the Sahel specifically. This program series has been organized by ACSS in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Senegal, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development and U.S. Africa Command. The participants gathered here represent more than a dozen countries and, reflecting the importance of interagency and whole-of-society coordination, come from the security sector, civilian ministries, civil society organizations, and international organizations.

I would like to formally thank the Government of the Republic of Senegal for being such supportive hosts for this event --- the combination of Senegal’s rich history of gracious hospitality makes Dakar an outstanding place to conduct this workshop. I would also like to thank the government of Senegal for their continued support to our Regional office

here in Dakar. We have had five great years and we look forward to many more years to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my distinct pleasure to introduce His Excellency Pathé Seck, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Seck is a retired Lieutenant General. He graduated from the French Military Superior School of Saint Cyr. Previously, General Seck was the High Commander of the Gendarmerie and was also a former Ambassador to Portugal. He is the first gendarmerie officer to be appointed Minister of Interior. He has a PHD in Military, Defense and security history from the Institute of Criminology of Paris. General/Ambassador/Dr. Seck is the recipient of many national and internal awards.

Please join me in welcoming His Excellency Pathé Seck, Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Senegal.

--- Comments ---

Mister Minister, thank you very much for the very rich remarks. We understand you have a Cabinet meeting to go to and we appreciate your efforts to open this program this morning. Ladies and gentlemen, please stand as Minister Seck departs.

Please be seated.

This seminar is the third in a series of ACSS programs exploring ways to counter violent extremism in Africa.

Our first program, conducted in 2011 here in Dakar, brought together participants from across the continent to identify comprehensive solutions to the many drivers of violent extremism.

Our second program was held in Kigali, Rwanda in January 2012. It narrowed the focus, addressing efforts to prevent youth radicalization in Eastern Africa.

These initial programs generated specific recommendations that participants have taken home and worked to implement, including the need to do the following:

- Adopt an international, interagency, and whole-of-society approach to countering violent extremism;
- Find and develop counter-narratives to violent extremism by supporting credible, local voices and encouraging journalistic professionalism;
- Mainstream marginalized youth, including adjusting cultural norms to facilitate the transition to adulthood for young men;
- Involve and engage young people, women, and Diaspora communities in CVE efforts, leveraging political, civil, and business opportunities so that these key populations -- so often victimized by violent extremism -- can play a positive transformative role in countering violent extremism.

This week's seminar offers us the opportunity to undertake a strategic assessment and dialogue regarding the role that development does, and could play, in CVE work in the Sahel. This is a critical topic not only for today, but for the coming months and years.

The Sahel contains some of the least developed nations on Earth, and in recent years, the region has also come to suffer from the rise of violent extremism and other transnational threats, such as drug trafficking and abductions of foreigners, both motivated by a toxic mixture of ideology and personal financial gain.

While current direct operations against violent extremist organizations are underway, in Mali, Nigeria, and elsewhere, questions remain about long-term strategies and tools that can deal with many sources and facets that sustain violent extremist challenges in the region.

Development programs, meanwhile, are often overlooked in this effort. They are often expensive investments that must acknowledge governance and social challenges on the ground and require judicious elaboration and application in order to effectively counter violent extremism.

This seminar provides a critical opportunity to develop specific recommendations for whether, when, and how to implement development programs to counter violent extremism in the Sahel in the long run.

I challenge each of you to contribute fully to this week's program by bringing your experience and expertise to our candid dialogue, and by honing your exchanges to help develop actionable, strategic recommendations that can advance the fight against violent extremism in the region.

Our intent is simple: bring together uniformed and civilian security practitioners at seminars such as this one to explore and discuss ways to better position ourselves to have a safer and more prosperous region. We do this in a non-attribution academic setting which permits us to discuss and challenge each other to delve deeply into these issues and develop practical, African solutions. We will not give you a template to do this. We will however, help you by facilitating a candid dialogue to produce critical thinking for you to develop practical recommendations that can enhance the security sector in your respective countries and throughout the region.

I look forward to the results of your deliberations, and I want you to know that the Africa Center is committed to making sure the recommendations you adopt for yourselves here will also be disseminated to decision-makers throughout our network in Africa and beyond, and that ACSS looks forward to sustaining our collective dialogue on pressing African security challenges.

Our next speaker is Ambassador Lewis Lukens, the United States Ambassador the Republic of Senegal and Guinea Bissau. Ambassador, before asking you to come to the podium I would like to thank you and your U.S. Embassy country team here in Dakar for

your outstanding support to the Africa Center in general and specifically our West Africa Regional Office. I also want to thank you for participating in this program, I know your schedule is very busy and we appreciate your interest and leadership in Africa Center events. The Africa Center looks forward to continuing this superb relationship in the future.

Ambassador Lukens is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and has served in a variety of positions in the White House and the U.S. Department of State. He was Senior Director for Administration at the National Security Council during and, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, has served twice previously in the State Department's Executive Secretariat, and worked as Special Assistant to the Director General of the Foreign Service.

Ambassador Lukens is the recipient of five individual Superior Honor awards, three group Superior Honor awards, and two individual Meritorious Honor awards. He has an AB and Masters in Public Policy from Princeton University.

Please welcome Ambassador Lewis Lukens.

--- Comments ---

Ambassador, thank you for attending this morning's opening ceremony. I know you have a very busy schedule today so ladies and gentlemen, please rise as Ambassador Lukens departs.

Please be seated.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my great pleasure to introduce our Keynote Speaker,

His Excellency Ould-Abdallah, President of the Center for Strategy and Security in the Sahel Sahara (Centre4s). Previously, Ambassador Ould-Abdallah was Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia. Ambassador Ould-Abdallah has held a number of senior positions in his native government (the Islamic Republic of Mauritania), including the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation and the Minister of Trade and Transportation. He also has served as ambassador to the United States, the European Union, and the Benelux countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands). He is co-founder and an advisory board member of Transparency International, an international non-governmental organization devoted to the fight against corruption.

Please join me in welcoming H.E. Ould-Abdallah to the podium.

--- Comments---

Ambassador, thank you very much for helping us open this seminar this morning.

We have time to open the floor to questions and comments but before doing so, and in keeping with the Africa Center tradition of non-attribution, I would like to ask the media representatives present to excuse themselves from the plenary room before we take questions.

---Media withdraws---

--- Q & A ---

These programs require a significant amount of planning, coordination and support from multiple organizations to be successful. Therefore, before we close this opening ceremony I would like to take a couple minutes to acknowledge some of the major players that contributed to the program.

This program would not have been possible without the generous contribution of funding and support by the United States Agency for International Development, as well as support from the Department of State and U.S. Africa Command. Thank you!

Finally, I would like to thank the ACSS faculty and staff for their dedication and hard work putting this program together. It takes almost six months to develop the concept, develop the operational plans, coordinate partner contributions and execute a program such as this. Therefore I would like to specifically recognize Dr. Ben Nickels, our academic lead, and Mr. Claude Toze, our operations lead, and the entire project team for a job well done.

Lastly, I would like to thank you, our participant's for making time in your own busy schedules to attend this program, and I wish you success throughout the week. I would like to remind everyone that we have a group photo immediately following this ceremony and I invite each of you to a welcome dinner at 7:30 PM this evening

This concludes the opening ceremony.