Nigeria Call for Action
The development of the Nigeria Call for Action was facilitated through STRIVE Juvenile: Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups, funded by the European Union.
Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA)
Babagana Monguno, Major General (retired), National Security Advisor

For more than a decade, terrorist and violent extremist groups have recruited, maimed and killed thousands of children across Nigeria. In the 1999 Constitution the Nigerian State committed itself to protect children from “any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect”. Preventing all forms of child recruitment will require robust investment into the creation of protective environments for children. At the same time, those children who have been associated with these groups will require support on their journey to rehabilitation and reintegration.

Our strategies at addressing all forms of violent extremism will require a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, as set out in the Policy Framework and National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. The strategies would also be enhanced by the support and collaboration from our regional and international partners.

With the adoption of the Nigeria Call for Action, the Government of Nigeria at various levels and other stakeholders across different segments of the society has renewed our shared commitment to protecting children from terrorism, other forms of crimes and violent extremism. Together with the recent adoption of the Handover Protocol between the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United Nations System for children, the protection of children from terrorism and violent extremism in Nigeria would be strengthened. This is an important step towards the protection of children in the context of insecurity.

Let us each do our part to ensure that these children have the future they deserve.

UNODC Country Office Nigeria (CONIG)
Oliver Stolpe, UNODC Representative to Nigeria

When children are recruited, starved, forced to clean and cook, trained to fight, sexually abused, neglected, exploited to participate in hostilities and risk their lives, we have failed them as a society.

International law establishes that children require special protection from all forms of violence and that they should grow up “in a family environment” and “in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding” in order to reach “their full and harmonious development” (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). And yet, children continue to be recruited, used and exploited by criminal and armed groups, including terrorist groups.

Thus, UNODC proudly partners with the Nigerian government to provide support to these children and is thankful to the European Union for providing resources through the STRIVE Juvenile project.

Thanks to the leading role played by the Office of the National Security Adviser and the joint efforts of multiple national stakeholders, the Nigeria Call for Action expresses the governmental commitment to protecting children from terrorism and violent extremism. Together with the Handover Protocol, this declaration aims to ensure that children can access rehabilitation and reintegration support, and return to society after violence.

This is an inspiring example of political will at regional and global level, and an important step towards mainstreaming child protection in humanitarian, development and peace efforts.
THE NIGERIA CALL FOR ACTION

DECLARATION ON THE TREATMENT OF CHILDREN ASSOCIATED WITH TERRORIST AND VIOLENT EXTREMIST GROUPS

PREAMBLE

Acknowledging that child recruitment and exploitation are serious forms of violence against children and expressing deep concern for their harmful and widespread impact on the physical and mental well-being of the child and on the harmonious development of his or her personality as well as for their consequences on communities and society at large;

Recognizing that terrorism poses a threat to peace and security, and that children are particularly affected by this phenomenon;

Strongly reaffirming that children are entitled to special care and assistance and that their rights require special protection;

Expressing grave concern at the ongoing violence perpetrated by terrorist and violent extremist groups against children in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, including killings, abductions, pillaging, child early and forced marriage, rape, sexual slavery and other sexual and gender-based violence, and recruitment, use and exploitation of children, including increasingly the use of children as suicide bombers;

Stressing that international coordination and cooperation and shared commitment to the values of peace and justice are essential to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism,

BODY OF THE DECLARATION

1. We reaffirm adherence to international and national laws, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict as well as relevant universal counter-terrorism provisions, calling on Member States to prohibit all forms of child recruitment and exploitation by non-State armed and criminal groups, with no distinction related to age, gender, religious, ethnic or socio-cultural background, consent, or specific designation of the armed and/or criminal group, including through criminalization, with a view to fostering accountability for child rights violations.

2. We consider that children associated with, or affected by, terrorist and violent extremist groups are primarily victims and should be treated accordingly, in a way that takes into account their best interests as a primary consideration, that promotes their physical and psychological recovery and that fosters their health, self-respect and dignity through child-sensitive and gender-sensitive approaches.
3. We emphasize the need to invest in measures to prevent recruitment and exploitation of children by criminal and armed groups, including those designated as terrorist and violent extremist groups, as a priority in order to effectively protect children and society as a whole from future violence, including instances of re-recruitment.

4. We affirm that a whole of government and whole of society approach, in line with the national legal and policy frameworks, including the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, are necessary for ensuring the appropriate treatment of children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups, with a view to promoting their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, which shall be the primary objective of any action affecting these children and as a pre-requisite for building peaceful societies.

5. We affirm that any child formerly associated with terrorist or violent extremist groups who is in contact with the national authorities, including the justice system, has the right to be treated according to specific safeguards, in accordance with applicable international and national laws, and in a way that prevents further victimization and is conducive to promoting his or her rehabilitation and reintegration. Hence, deprivation of liberty and prosecution should only be considered measures of last resort.

6. We endorse the UNODC Roadmap on the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups as a valuable resource for comprehensive guidance on strategies and measures to address the situation of these children.

7. We resolve and pledge to integrate the protection of public safety and child rights as complementary objectives, which is necessary to overcome the perceived dichotomy between security and child’s rights protection and we call on UNODC to provide support, where necessary, to the process of its implementation at global, regional, national and local levels.
This project is funded by the European Union.
Bridging the gap between public safety and child rights

#STRIVEJuvenile
#ENDVAC

www.unodc.org/strive-juvenile  www.ec.europa.eu