

The U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability

10-Year Strategic Plan for Coastal West Africa

Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo

The U.S. government (USG) is committed to expanding partnerships in West Africa to prevent violent conflicts from emerging or further spreading across the region. The central Sahel region of Africa experienced more terrorist attacks than any other part of the world in 2021, with terrorist activity increasingly expanding across borders in neighboring Coastal West Africa (CWA) countries. Violent extremist activity is exacerbating distrust among civilians and security and government actors in border areas that are historically disadvantaged in terms of political representation and economic development. This trend perpetuates and coincides with growing strains on democratic institutions across the region.

In April 2022, President Biden announced the USG would prioritize partnerships with the CWA countries of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo to advance the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability \(SPCPS\)](#). Leaders across these countries are committed to taking comprehensive action at local, national, and regional levels to build upon existing resiliencies and prevent conflict and instability, including the spread of violent extremism (VE). The USG seeks to be a partner in this prevention endeavor. This plan provides a framework and roadmap for increased U.S. engagement and assistance in this regard, working with international partners.

U.S. embassies across the region and interagency leaders came together to develop this plan for the region, moving beyond traditional bilateral operating lines. This included dedicated integration and planning workshops in the region and in Washington. In

addition, U.S. officials conducted wide-ranging consultations with local, national, and regional partners to inform this plan, including high-level diplomatic engagements, workshops with international donor partners, and dialogue with over 100 representatives from civil society organizations. Continued, ongoing multi-stakeholder engagement will be central to further implementation. As stated in the U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa, “the United States must reset its relations with African counterparts, listen to diverse local voices, and widen the circle of engagement to advance its strategic objectives to the benefit of both Africans and Americans.”

This plan envisions a range of U.S. and partner efforts to advance the long-term goal that **Coastal West Africans promote peace and prevent violent conflict and violent extremism (VE) that risks destabilizing the region**. The term “Coastal West Africans” encompasses civilians, governments and institutions, security forces, civil society, and regional bodies and seeks to reinforce the united front required for success. (Note: Security forces refer to all civilian and defense forces with a security mandate.) The USG will focus diplomatic engagement and assistance tools at local, national, and regional levels on advancing three overlapping objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Social cohesion is strengthened within and between at-risk communities.
- **Objective 2:** Improved government responsiveness, inclusion, and accountability to at-risk communities.
- **Objective 3:** Enhanced security force responsiveness and accountability to at-risk communities.

This 10-year plan is explicitly crafted to incorporate lessons learned from overly securitized approaches to addressing VE-related challenges in the Sahel region over the

past decade. A stronger social contract and increased trust between national and local governments, security actors, community leaders, and the public will facilitate peaceful resolution of disputes and reduce the ability of violent extremists, criminals, and other destabilizing actors to exploit ethnic, religious, and livelihood cleavages. This plan seeks to reinforce and buttress promising national commitments by the five governments to address VE-related challenges in a more holistic fashion, emphasizing inclusive development and responsive governance.

The U.S. government will marshal and adapt a range of engagement and assistance to support these objectives in each of the five countries, recognizing unique national dynamics and challenges that affect each country's orientation toward these threats and the potential for expansive partnership. U.S. engagement and assistance under this plan will be tailored accordingly to the individual countries. For example, some countries face more exigent security assistance needs, while others are more focused on economic revitalization. U.S. support to Guinea continues to be oriented toward encouraging a return to constitutional, civilian-led democracy. At the same time, the plan will support mechanisms to promote regional cooperation and sharing lessons learned – both among government and non-government actors – to effectively prevent conflict and promote stability. The USG will seek to bolster existing mechanisms that can facilitate that cooperation.

The plan includes a strong commitment to put in place the necessary operating structures and staffing to enable more effective interagency U.S. government collaboration to promote prevention across the region. State, USAID, and DoD are taking steps to enhance coordinated staffing across U.S. Embassies in the region, including regional coordinators, and increasing collaboration with the DFC, MCC, Treasury, and other key U.S. government actors. Embassies in the region will engage

regularly to advance implementation of this plan, including to hold strategic reviews to assess shared threats, challenges, and opportunities include necessary resources in the President's Budget Request. This level of planning and coordination across the U.S. government will enable more effective and strategic engagement with key regional and international partners to advance shared objectives.

Overall, in line with the SPCPS and based on lessons learned, this plan represents a commitment to innovate and enhance how the USG engages and works with regional partners. The plan calls for a more flexible and effective approach, including:

- Shifting the focus to include prevention;
- Focusing on dual tracks of bilateral and regional engagement;
- Integrating security and governance approaches;
- Assuming a supporting role toward partner nation and regional institution plans;
- Streamlining international donor coordination;
- Investing in new field-based staffing constructs;
- Committing to a strategic monitoring and evaluation agenda; and
- Increasing focus on financing for women and youth in support of economic stability.

U.S. leaders will continue to innovate and adapt this plan as new developments occur, including changing political or security dynamics on the ground. Officials will monitor and adapt to threat dynamics that cut across the Sahel and CWA that could create new challenges and limitations. U.S. leaders and partners will come together, at least annually, to review ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) efforts and make strategic shifts to the plan as necessary. Through consultations, iterative analysis,

and ongoing learning and reflection, this implementation plan will continuously evolve to reflect a shared vision for strategic prevention of VE and destabilizing conflict in the region.