



## **A brief on recommendations from the final report from the U.S. Institute of Peace Coastal West Africa Senior Study Group**

The objectives for Coastal West Africa envisioned in the new U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability are ambitious. Success will require the U.S. government to make the strategy a priority in its broader foreign policy agenda and to better coordinate its diplomatic, development and defense efforts. This includes high-level leadership and commitment of additional human and financial resources.

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Specific recommendations include:

### **Assign leadership at a high level, both in Washington and in the region.**

- ▶ Responsibility for the Coastal West Africa strategy must be vested with a senior policy coordinator, ideally at the level of undersecretary of state.
- ▶ Policy oversight for the strategy should be led by the assistant secretary of state for Africa and the State Department's Africa Bureau, with engagement from the Offices of West African Affairs, Economic and Regional Affairs, and Regional Peace and Security to support a robust "3D" — diplomacy, development and defense — effort.
- ▶ In the region, ownership of this effort must also be clear, both in the five countries identified by the strategy and regionally.
  - Ambassadors in each country should be charged with ensuring peace and security are recognized priorities for their missions and that their country teams effectively integrate these priorities across their operations.
  - A regional coordinator of the strategy should be appointed with a particular focus on supporting U.S. missions that have limited or no presence from USAID. This coordinator should be based at a U.S. diplomatic mission that allows regular access to and engagement with regional organizations. Although Nigeria is not among the strategy's five targeted countries, Abuja has one of the larger U.S. missions in West Africa and is the seat of the region's key international organization, the Economic Community of West African States, and Nigeria has historically played a leadership role in the region.
  - Bilateral and regional USAID mission directors should also be specifically assigned responsibility for ensuring peace and security are recognized priorities for their missions, represented in their Country Development Cooperation Strategies.

### **Feature the commitment to ensure peace and security in Coastal West Africa in U.S. foreign policy leadership activities.**

- ▶ The president and other high-level officials should regularly express the U.S. government's commitment to fostering peace, security and good governance in Coastal West Africa and build on the Biden administration's undertaking to highlight the growing importance of Africa to U.S. interests.
- ▶ The United States should build on the commitments made at the 2022 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit and continue high-level visits to the continent, particularly to the Coastal West Africa region.

### **Use the Coastal West Africa Strategy to ensure all U.S. policies in the region focuses on peace and security.**

- ▶ The strategy offers a unique opportunity for the U.S. government to review all of its policies and activities around the region to ensure that they have the advancement of peace and stability as a clear, explicit priority.
- ▶ Given the critical role of good governance in mitigating the risk for violence and insecurity, all U.S. activities in the region should include support to individual countries and regional organizations to improve governance.

- ▶ The United States should encourage other international actors, including nations and international organizations, to have the advancement of peace and stability as a clear and explicit priority in all their efforts in the region.

#### **Ensure greater alignment and effective coordination among U.S. diplomacy, development and defense efforts.**

- ▶ A joint State Department-USAID strategic officer should be appointed to coordinate the implementation of the Coastal West Africa strategy with a liaison from the Defense Department. This coordination should ensure an effective “3D” effort to support peace and security in the region.
- ▶ Operationally, the State Department’s and USAID’s efforts to implement the strategy in Coastal West Africa should be led by State’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations and USAID’s Africa Bureau, with the Defense Department taking the lead for building the capacity of national and regional security structures, particularly promoting security forces’ accountability to the civilian governments and populations.
- ▶ The State Department, USAID and the Defense Department should establish teams in Washington and in the region to ensure interagency coordination, incorporating other agencies as appropriate.
- ▶ Regular interagency meetings in Washington and at the regional and country levels should monitor implementation and inform improvement of the activities and programs.
- ▶ Identify specific, relevant objectives and clear metrics to guide the design and implementation of the strategy, including improved sociopolitical outcomes that mark progress in advancing peace and security in each country and regionally.
- ▶ Clear and meaningful metrics should go beyond tallies of projects, dollars invested and numbers of beneficiaries.
- ▶ In defining these objectives, the United States should collaborate with both national governments and civil society to ensure that they reflect national development plans and national and regional aspirations for peace and security.

#### **Ensure funding that matches the U.S. ambitions for peace and security in Coastal West Africa.**

- ▶ The strategy is designed to divide a total \$200 million annually among the five Coastal West Africa countries and four other countries. This level of funding can have a catalytic effect but is insufficient to the task, particularly given that U.S. missions in Coastal West Africa are already under-staffed and under-resourced.
- ▶ The U.S. government needs to consider carefully how to use these dollars to effectively catalyze additional funding, particularly from other international actors, including countries with historic ties to Coastal West Africa, multilateral development banks and businesses.
- ▶ At an operational level, the U.S. government should provide its ambassadors with access to flexible funding, modeled on the nimble programming that the State Department’s Office of Transition Initiatives has carried out in the region over the past eight years. This should include close monitoring by U.S. embassies to help local groups working on relevant issues. These steps would allow the region’s bilateral missions — especially those with limited or no USAID presence — to seize opportunities to advance peace and stability goals.