

**Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian
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European Union Working Party on Terrorism - International Aspects (COTER)

7 December 2022

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for the opportunity to join this meeting to brief you on the recent activities undertaken by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the upcoming milestones over the next year.

Let me begin by first thanking the Czech Presidency for the excellent cooperation with UNOCT, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration under the Swedish Presidency.

I am also profoundly grateful to the European Union for our strategic partnership, in particular your political support for effective, human rights-complaint, multilateral action to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism.

Dear Colleagues,

Despite continued leadership losses, the top global terrorist threats continue to emanate from Al-Qaida, Da'esh and their affiliates – both in conflict and non-conflict zones. They have continued to expand in and from the Sahel towards the Gulf of Guinea, made further inroads into Central and Southeastern Africa, and demonstrated a lethal resilience in Somalia and its neighbours. Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups now enjoy more freedom in Afghanistan than at any time since 2001.

Because terrorists continue to attack, move, fundraise, and communicate transnationally, and explore and use new technologies to stay ahead of us, we need a reinvigorated multilateral response that is grounded in human rights and the rule of law. In this regard, our partnership with the European Union and its Member States is crucial.

As you are aware, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which the General Assembly adopted by consensus on the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, is a unique instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter-terrorism.

The General Assembly reviews the Strategy every two years, taking stock of progress made in its implementation and developing a roadmap to guide the UN's counter-terrorism efforts going forward.

At the conclusion of last June's seventh review of the Strategy, the General Assembly adopted a consensus resolution that included enhanced language on human rights, the rule of law, gender, civic space, and victims of terrorism. It of course mentioned specific concerns about Africa, and for the first time addressed what has been variously called right-wing terrorism, racially and ethnically motivated terrorism, but which the General Assembly agreed to call terrorism based on xenophobia, racism, or intolerance, including on the basis of religion or belief, which for brevity's sake I will refer to as XRI.

Allow me now to highlight a few key activities that our Office has undertaken to advance some of these issues since I last addressed you in June.

First, we led the preparation of the first report of the Secretary-General on XRI. This report, issued at the end of August, advances an initial understanding of this emerging threat and its transnational aspects, while noting that further data and research are necessary to fully grasp this type of violence.

The key findings and recommendations in the report were discussed during a high-level event organized by UNOCT on 30 November.

Second, we held the first UN Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism in September, which was attended by more than 400 participants, including victims and representatives from victims' associations.

The Congress was an opportunity to share best practices, hear directly from victims, and consolidate achievements made thus far, translating them into concrete actions at the international, regional, and national level.

I would like to thank the European Union and its Member States for their active participation in this important event.

We stand ready to support Member States in developing comprehensive assistance plans to better support victims of terrorism, including by benefitting from Model Legislative Provisions we developed with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which we hope to soon begin piloting in several countries.

We will work closely with co-chairs Spain and Iraq and other Members of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism, including the European Union, to insure that the General Assembly takes up victims' issues in the lead up to and in next year's review of the Strategy, and to organize the next Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism, which will take place in Spain in 2024.

Lastly, we organized a High-Level Conference on International and Regional Border Security and Management Cooperation to Counter Terrorism and Prevent the Movement of Terrorists held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in October.

We are sincerely grateful to the European Union for the excellent cooperation in organizing this event, which drew over 700 participants, as well as the insightful remarks from H.E. HR/VP Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles at the opening session.

We also appreciate the commitment of the European Union to the “Dushanbe Process,” as well as to strengthening border security and management cooperation in Central Asia.

Dear Colleagues,

The upcoming eighth biennial review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2023 will represent a decisive moment to renew international attention on counter-terrorism efforts.

The President of the UN General Assembly has appointed the Permanent Representatives of Canada and Tunisia to the United Nations in New York to act as co-facilitators to assist him in negotiating a new resolution on the Strategy.

As the substantive secretariat for this process, UNOCT has begun preparation of the Secretary-General’s report on activities of the United Nations system in implementing the Strategy, to be issued by the end of February 2023.

The report will be informed by inputs received from Member States, Permanent Observers to the United Nations, UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, and civil society organizations.

I take this opportunity to thank all European Union Member States that have already provided their feedback.

I also strongly urge the European Union to work with partners across all regional groups to maintain the General Assembly’s consensus on the Strategy, which has existed for 16 years.

In parallel with the eighth review of the Strategy, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism will organize the Third United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies, in June 2023.

The Conference, and accompanying side events, will provide a platform for Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, civil society, and the private sector to exchange information and good practices, as well as to explore further cooperation on key priorities under the four pillars of the Strategy.

Dear Colleagues,

In the first quarter of next year, UNOCT will organize the first high-level counter-terrorism conference for the Caribbean region, in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in collaboration with CARICOM and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. This will be the first time that Caribbean and South American countries and their partners will come together in such a format to exchange information and good practices on the fight against terrorism.

As part of our efforts to enhance our support to African countries, we are organizing with the Government of Nigeria an African Summit on Counter-Terrorism in October 2023 in Abuja, on the theme of “Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institution Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa.”

The event will be organized under the auspices of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. It will review the nature and severity of the threat of terrorism in parts of Africa, with a view to enhance multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation and reframe the international community’s collective response to terrorism on the continent. We would like to see outcomes that promote practical concepts for mechanisms for better harnessing the substantial but fragmentary efforts to address what is increasingly a continent-spanning and overlapping series of terrorist threats.

We look forward to the participation and support of the European Union in this important event.

Dear Colleagues,

The European Union is the third largest donor to UNOCT and has contributed generously to numerous programmes and initiatives.

While we are working to secure more stable funding for our enduring, core management, policy, and coordination functions, we continue to prioritize existing partnerships to sustain our capacity-building support to Member States across the globe.

The partnership with the European Union is of great importance to our Office. We are proud of what we have achieved together in recent years.

Our regular discussions during the EU-UN Leaders’ Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism have been instrumental in enhancing our cooperation under the framework of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I look forward to strengthening our collaboration, and to hearing your thoughts on how we can work closer together, in the spirit of multilateralism and the United Nations Charter.

Thank you, Madam Chair.