



# UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Director and Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Briefing on “Growing trends in terrorism – diverse actors and the importance of multilateralism”**

**UNHQ, Conference Room 9**

**5 April 2023**

Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues,

I thank Portugal for organizing this afternoon’s briefing, and for inviting UNOCT to contribute to this impressive panel on such an important topic.

While collective action by various constellations of the international community have led to a reduction in the overall number of deaths caused by terrorism since its peak in 2015, the lethality and intensity of attacks have actually increased in some parts of the world. Consequently, terrorism remains a major threat to international peace and security, with significant implications for human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development.

In some of his recent reports, the Secretary-General has underlined how the global terrorism landscape continues to evolve.

Of major concern is the threat posed by terrorist groups such as Al Qaida, Da’esh and their affiliates, which remain high, particularly in and around conflict zones, where the vast majority of deaths from terrorism occur today.

The Secretary-General has also repeatedly noted the urgency of the situation in West Africa and the Sahel, where Da’esh and Al-Qaida affiliates continue to expand. The threats emanating from this region to border, and maritime security is also concerning.

The situation in the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, where Al-Qaida has a safe haven and other terrorist groups have greater freedom of movement than they have had in the past few decades, continues to pose a significant threat to Central Asia and beyond. The heinous attack near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs just last week, claimed by Da'esh in the Khorasan province, is another painful illustration of the presence and activity of terrorist groups in the country.

The complex linkages between terrorism and conflict are underlined in the latest Global Terrorism Index published by the Institute for Economics and Peace just last month.

According to the report, 98 per cent of the deaths attributed to terrorism last year were registered in countries affected by violent conflict, while the 10 most impacted by terrorism are experiencing ongoing armed conflict. Disconcertingly, the report also notes that Sub-Saharan Africa is now the epicentre of terrorism in the world.

In recent years, terrorist groups have adjusted their ways of working, including by exploiting new and emerging technologies such as unmanned aircraft systems, giving terrorists access to the third dimension of warfare and undermining defenses predicated on ground attacks. Improvements in the range and payload of these systems, as well as their growing commercial availability and affordability, have allowed terrorist groups, especially Da'esh, Boko Haram and the Houthis, to use consumer drones to attack security forces, surveil targets and film propaganda through airborne video capabilities.

Beyond conflict zones, terrorist groups continue to recruit and inspire attacks by independent actors and small cells. These individuals and groups often have transnational connections, and their actions are often based on xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief. A few Member States consider terrorism on such basis as the fastest growing, or even the most prominent domestic security threat that they face.

Also of concern is the number of terrorists with battlefield experience who relocate from conflict zones to their home or third countries. Their uncontrolled return could pose a particularly high threat, either on their own, or in combination with other domestic threats.

This convoluted threat landscape underlines the need for multilateral and holistic responses to counter and prevent terrorism.

Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

The General Assembly's eighth biennial review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is a timely opportunity for Member States to renew their commitment to multilateral counter-terrorism efforts, to re-calibrate the terrorist threat assessment, and to identify and explore areas that may require further attention.

To that end, sustaining the long-time consensus behind the Strategy would be of the utmost importance.

Moreover, the ongoing preparation of the New Agenda for Peace is also an important opportunity for the Secretary-General to lay out his vision of a forward-looking normative agenda for addressing strategic risks and threats, including terrorism.

In line with Member State inputs, the agenda will consider what is needed to boost prevention efforts as an essential part of comprehensive strategies that address a multitude of elements beyond purely security-related concerns. The centrality of international law, including human rights, as well as gender considerations, cannot be overstated.

In developing the New Agenda for Peace, UNOCT and the other co-leads (DPPA, DPO and ODA) are striving to advance bold yet realistic proposals in that regard.

We are developing the counter-terrorism related proposals around two main axes. The first, more external, focuses on strengthening multilateral action to counter today's terrorist insurgencies but also individuals who are inspired and influenced or even directed by transnational terrorist organizations and manifestations. This will require refining our approaches to strengthening prevention efforts, including through whole-of-society approaches and better integration of multiple strategies by Member States, including as they relate not only to prevention of violent extremism, but also peacebuilding that leads to resilience.

Strengthening such responses will also require developing stronger partnership with the private sector and the youth. We believe there is room for improving our engagement with these constituencies to address new and emerging issues. The challenges of addressing misinformation and disinformation, as well as radicalization in gaming platforms, are telling examples in that regard.

The second axis, more internal, focuses on ensuring robust, whole-of-UN responses, including through consideration to the horizontal integration of the UN counter-terrorism architecture.

This would result in more effective responses, drawing on the comparative advantages of UN entities with counter-terrorism mandates.

UNOCT looks forward to continuing the work with Member States, international and regional organizations, our Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, civil society, academia, and the private sector to ensure whole-of-society and multilateral efforts to counter terrorism are effective and consistent with international law, especially international human rights law and international humanitarian law. For if we have learned nothing else from the history of countering terrorism and terrorist insurgencies, it is that failure to uphold human rights while countering terrorism will often perpetuate the problem rather than solve it. One need look no further than at UNDP's reports on the Journey to Extremism to be reminded of that.

Thank you.