



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Briefing to the Security Council on the 18th report of the Secretary-General on the threat
posed by Da'esh**

15 February 2024

Madam President,
Excellencies,

I thank the Security Council for the opportunity to brief you today on the 18th report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security, and the United Nations efforts in support of Member States to counter the threat.

I am pleased to be joined by Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Ms. Nathalia Gherman, to present this report, which was prepared jointly by our offices and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, led by Mr. Justin Hustwitt.

And I look forward to the briefing by the Secretary-General of the International Criminal Police Organization, Mr. Jürgen Stock. INTERPOL is indeed a key member of our Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. I'm very grateful to Mr. Stock for the excellent cooperation.

I also take this opportunity to lament the numerous casualties and human suffering caused by terrorism globally, and to offer my sincere condolences to all governments and peoples affected by such violence.

The tragedy, destruction and suffering caused by terrorism should serve as a catalyst to renew international commitment to not only remedy its horrific impact, but also and most importantly to step up efforts to prevent such attacks in the first place.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism will continue to work with Member States to that end, including to support survivor-centred, gender-sensitive and human rights-compliant approaches to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Madam President,
Excellencies,

While providing some additional details on its evolution, the present report reinforces the main trend observed during the past few years: that Da'esh continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security, notably in conflict zones, despite significant progress achieved by Member States in countering the threat.

Such progress has translated into a sizeable reduction in the group's operational capacities in some regions. The prolonged delay in announcing a new leader after the killing of his predecessor earlier in 2023 is assessed to reflect internal challenges and difficulties in ensuring the new leader's security.

Moreover, Member States' efforts to counter the financing of terrorism continue to yield tangible results. Da'esh's financial reserves are currently estimated between 10 million and 25 million dollars, down from hundreds of millions a few years ago.

Beyond the Da'esh core, important progress has also been achieved to counter the capacities of Da'esh affiliates. In countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as Egypt and Mozambique, terrorist activity by these affiliates has been reduced by effective counter-terrorism efforts by Member States.

In Afghanistan, efforts by the de facto authorities have reportedly had an impact on the ability of the Da'esh affiliate to conduct attacks inside the country. Nevertheless, the group maintains an intention to carry out attacks abroad.

Despite these important achievements, the risk of resurgence by Da'esh remains. Since November, the Da'esh core has increased its attacks in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, attesting to its resilience and adaptability.

In other parts of the world, the threat levels have been raised in several European Member States, while in South-East Asia, the Philippines have faced increasing terrorist attacks.

Yet, parts of Africa, notably West Africa and the Sahel, remain the most affected by the activity of Da'esh and its affiliates. The situation in this region has deteriorated in the reporting period and is becoming increasingly more complex, with local ethnic and regional disputes conflating with the agenda and operations of these groups.

As previously reported, Da'esh affiliates continued to operate with increasingly more autonomy from the Da'esh core.

Should this trend of greater autonomy persist, the report alerts to the risk that a vast area of instability may emerge from Mali to the borders of Nigeria.

Countering the threat of terrorism in Africa remains a priority for the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. The African Counter-Terrorism Summit planned for April 2024 was designed to be African-led and African-owned.

However, as this process could not yet ensure full inclusivity of all African Member States, the Summit had to be postponed.

The Office of Counter-Terrorism will continue to strengthen its support to African Member States and regional organizations, including through our programme offices in Nairobi and Rabat.

Madam President,
Excellencies,

While trends and developments outlined in the report are concerning, they also call for reflection and action on at least three fronts.

First, the grave implications of terrorism – and sometimes of counter-terrorism. In addition to immense human suffering, terrorism threatens international peace and security, and hampers sustainable development.

Moreover, time and again, we have seen counter-terrorism measures being misused or creating unintended consequences. To avoid them, it remains crucial to ensure that counter-terrorism measures are grounded on international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law.

Among these unintended consequences, the dire and deteriorating situation of individuals, mostly women and children, still stranded in camps and other facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic are but one illustration.

Important progress has been made in the repatriation of these individuals by a few countries in the reporting period. However, as highlighted in successive reporting, the pace of repatriations remains too slow.

I echo the Secretary-General's repeated calls for Member States with nationals in such facilities to consider the implications of the current situation and scale up their efforts to facilitate the safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation of those individuals. The United Nations remains available to support Member States, upon request, through its Global Framework.

Second, the limits of counter-terrorism operations centred on force. The persistent threat posed by Da'esh, despite significant losses should serve as a reminder that more multidimensional approaches are necessary to address terrorism and its drivers.

Force alone is not the answer. Comprehensive responses, firmly grounded on political strategies, anchored in international law, and based on all-of-government and all-of-society approaches, are indispensable.

While Member States remain primarily responsible for countering terrorism, there is much to gain from multi-stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of counter-terrorism responses.

The United Nations stands ready to work with Member States in this regard. The Office of Counter-Terrorism continues to provide leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General across the United Nations system. In addition, our Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact ensures coherence and coordination of efforts among its 46 entities, maximizing the impact of our capacity-building.

And third, the need for prevention. On Monday 12 February, we commemorated the second International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when conducive to Terrorism, as promulgated by the General Assembly in its resolution 77/243.

Preventing terrorism from materializing is always more effective than remedying its impact, most especially on human lives. It is also more cost efficient.

Particularly in contexts where terrorist groups exploit conflict dynamics, addressing the conflict itself remains our best hope to mitigate the threat posed by Da'esh and other terrorist groups. Further prevention efforts, including through adequate financing, remains indispensable.

The United Nations System is adapting its capacity-building support to the evolution of the threat highlighted in this report. Our Countering Terrorist Travel Programme is now supporting 69 Member States, and the new Integrated Border Stability Mechanism will provide a coordination platform among United Nations entities and INTERPOL in West Africa. The Global Programme on Fusion Cells provides assistance to over 20 Member States to strengthen inter-agency cooperation and coordination. And we are also increasing our support to address the challenges and leverage the opportunities of new technologies, including unmanned aerial systems.

I call in this regard on Member States to favourably consider the Secretary-General's proposal outlined in his policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace, namely, for Member States to develop and adequately invest in national and regional prevention strategies to address all forms of violence, including terrorism.

Madam President,
Excellencies,

Terrorism is a multi-faceted threat. Countering it requires multilateral and decisive efforts.

As tensions rise in various parts of the world, let the consensus among Member States against terrorism serve to help find common ground, reduce friction, and reaffirm our commitment to multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow.

The Office of Counter-Terrorism, including through the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, will continue to support Member States in their efforts to counter this threat.

I thank you.