



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 19th report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat

8 August 2024

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

It is an honour to brief the Security Council on the 19th 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. Natalia Gherman, to present this report, which was prepared jointly by our Offices and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. As we approach the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism on 21 August, I would like to express my condolences to Member States that have been affected by acts of terrorism and my sympathy to the victims and their families.

In honour of this Day, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism will organize a high-level event to highlight the role of victims of terrorism as peace advocates. My Office will continue to support Member States in promoting survivor-centred, gender sensitive and human rights-compliant approaches.

Mr. President,
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Unfortunately, the situation in parts of Africa has not improved since my last briefing. The terrorism landscape in West Africa and the Sahel remains challenging and complex.

Terrorist groups continued to expand in the Sahel and inflict high casualties, undermining regional stability. Two of the Da'esh affiliates in the region, the Islamic State West Africa Province and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahel, have expanded and consolidated their areas of operations.

Should these groups extend their influence in northern littoral States, a vast territory stretching from Mali to northern Nigeria could fall under their effective control. In other parts

of the continent, Da'esh affiliates have increased their operational pace in northern Mozambique as well as in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a dramatic increase in terrorist attacks resulted in high civilian fatalities. Also in Somalia, the Da'esh affiliate has become stronger.

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Two of the risks outlined in reports over the past years have regrettably become manifest since my last briefing. The first is the risk of ISIL-K, the Da'esh affiliate in Afghanistan, carrying out terrorist attacks abroad.

ISIL-K has improved its financial and logistical capabilities in the past six months, including by tapping into Afghan and Central Asian diasporas for support. The group has also intensified its recruitment efforts.

The activity of Da'esh and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan remains a significant concern. We must unite to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a hotbed of terrorism.

In this regard, the efforts of neighbouring Member States to counter and prevent the spread of the threat emanating from Afghanistan is very important. The Office of Counter-Terrorism will continue to support Member States in Central Asia in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The second risk that has materialized in the reporting period refers to the resurgence of the Da'esh core. The group has claimed responsibility for the attacks conducted by ISIL-K globally, seeking to derive propaganda value for their cause.

In early January, the group demonstrated its continued global intent, launching a coordinated campaign across all its self-proclaimed "provinces". This included temporary surges of operations in January and March in Iraq, where operations had been otherwise largely contained. Da'esh has also increased its operational pace in the Syrian Arab Republic, with a surge of attacks especially in the central desert area.

Sustained counter-terrorism efforts will be required to prevent Da'esh from building upon these gains. Further efforts will also be required to address the dire security, humanitarian and human rights situation of camps and other detention facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. Some progress made by Member States in repatriating their nationals resulted in a slight decrease in the population of these camps. However, thousands of individuals continue to live in dire conditions: the camps are overcrowded, lacking in adequate shelter and basic services, including clean water and medical care.

The Secretary-General continues to call for Member States with (their) nationals stranded in these camps to scale up their efforts to facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of their citizens.

Elsewhere, the threat posed by ISIL-K resulted in heightened threat levels in Europe. The group is considered the greatest external terrorist threat to the continent.

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Cooperation among Member States remains indispensable to address the threat posed by Da'esh. For this reason, the Office of Counter-Terrorism supported the Government of Nigeria in organizing the High-level African Counter-Terrorism Meeting in Abuja in April.

I welcome the outcomes reflected in the Abuja Declaration and look forward to working closely with Member States in supporting the agreed actions. This includes the upgrade of the Nigerian National Counter-Terrorism Centre in Abuja to a Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre that will cover the Sahel and West Africa.

Given the complexity of the threat in the region, my Office is committed to supporting the Centre's initiative to address the drivers of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Looking ahead, the Office of Counter-Terrorism is jointly organizing with the Governments of Tajikistan and Kuwait, the Dushanbe High-Level Process Conference in Kuwait City in November. This event will be the fourth iteration of the Dushanbe Process and is intended to broaden the scope and impact of regional counter-terrorism cooperation well beyond Central Asia.

But cooperation alone will not suffice unless it leads to responses that are comprehensive and firmly grounded on political strategies. While responses may sometimes require the legitimate use of force, such force must be aligned with broader strategies. These strategies should be aimed at addressing the multifaceted drivers of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

And such responses must be fully compliant with international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr. President,
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Terrorism remains a significant challenge for the international community that no State can tackle alone. To eradicate the terrorist threat, we need inclusive, multilateral responses that are firmly grounded on political strategies, compliant with international law, and informed by all-of-society and all-of-government approaches.

The upcoming Summit of the Future represents a critical opportunity for Member States to recommit to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism along those lines.

The Office of Counter-Terrorism, including through the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, will continue to support and work in partnership with Member States to realize that vision.

I thank you.