



Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
Regional Expert Consultation on the Gender Dimensions of PRR Approaches for
Persons Associated with Boko Haram

29 March 2021

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The crisis in the Lake Chad Basin is one of the largest humanitarian emergencies in the world. For the past eleven years, Boko Haram has terrorized local communities in the region.

The suffering caused by Boko Haram has been severe. While men have been killed in great numbers, women and girls are the overwhelming majority among the displaced and abducted; and their suffering is extended sometimes to the point of life-long consequences.

The gender dimension must be central in the programmatic responses to support the victims of Boko Haram's terrorism.

The kidnapping of women and girls, their subjection to starvation, beatings, forced marriages, sexual slavery, and their coercion into performing suicide attacks are defining tactics of the group.

The Security Council has acknowledged how the pathways for women's association with terrorist groups are not always clearly defined, blurring a combination of roles such as victims, supporters, facilitators, and perpetrators.

While some women were forced into joining Boko Haram, others joined out of ideologic affinity or to attenuate their economic and protection needs.

In order to conduct adequate risk assessments or uphold fair trial and due process rights, the degree of agency, culpability and criminal responsibility must be determined on a case-by-case basis. The United Nations can support Member States in these efforts.

When disengaging, women are often met with ostracism, and even violence. In his latest annual report on Women, Peace and Security, the Secretary-General highlighted the concerning trend that women tend to receive less rehabilitation and reintegration support than men, and that such support is often insufficiently tailored to their specific needs. The United Nations is ready to support Member States to address the risk of recidivism and re-radicalization.

Security Council resolutions 2178 and 2396, the Lake Chad Basin Commission's Regional Strategies on Stabilization and on the Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Boko Haram Associated Persons call for the implementation of a gender-sensitive, comprehensive and tailored approach.

Security Council resolution 2349, which specifically addresses the situation in the Lake Chad Basin, also stresses the need to pay particular attention to the treatment and reintegration of women and children formerly associated with Boko Haram.

My Office stands together with the Lake Chad Basin Commission, UNODC and CTED to assist Member States in the region to mainstream gender considerations in the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram.

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The expertise of women-led organizations in community reintegration and rehabilitation is essential. The unique needs of women and girls must be addressed.

I am pleased that this workshop brings together government representatives as well as civil society and academia from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria to identify a set of expert recommendations to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the implementation of the Lake Chad Basin Regional SPRR Strategy.

Finally, I would also like to thank the Lake Chad Basin Commission for its leadership on SPRR and instrumental support.

I wish all participants success in developing the gender-responsive measures on which our common goal to achieve peace and security in the region relies.

I thank you.