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**UN Counter-Terrorism Week Side Event
“*Multilateral CT Cooperation: United Nations Global CT Coordination
Compact – Global Counterterrorism Forum partnership*”**

Updates on Ongoing Partnerships Panel

Wednesday 30 June 2021 from 08:00 AM to 09:30 AM

- Greetings from Washington, D.C. I am pleased to provide an update on the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Watchlisting Guidance Manual Initiative, co-led by the United States and the United Nations.
- The United States views the United Nations as an integral partner to help countries implement international obligations and commitments into domestic legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks. That is why we are pleased to have the UN partner with us on this important GCTF initiative and capitalize on its expertise, resources, and existing frameworks on terrorist travel.
- United Nations Security Council resolution 2396, adopted in 2017, calls on all UN Member States to develop watchlists or databases of known and suspected terrorists, including foreign terrorist fighters, or FTFs, and encourages States to share information through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to prevent terrorist travel. As FTFs and their family members leave areas once controlled by terrorist organizations, such as ISIS, the international community must be proactive in detecting, identifying, tracking, and, where appropriate, interdicting known and suspected terrorists as they attempt to travel. We must continually refine and improve our collective efforts, while also expanding the community of nations to counter terrorist travel worldwide.
- To assist countries with developing and using watchlists and corresponding databases as called for in resolution 2396, in 2018 Morocco and the United States launched an initiative under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) to provide guidelines for improving terrorist screening mechanisms and capabilities to interdict terrorist travel. This cooperation resulted in the development and adoption of the GCTF’s *New York Memorandum on Good Practices for Interdicting Terrorist Travel* in September 2019.
- To build on this achievement, in early 2020, the United Nations and the United States launched the Watchlisting Initiative, which held six virtual workshops from July 2020 through February 2021. Representatives of governments, international and regional

organizations, academia, and civil society participated in these workshops to discuss lessons learned and identify challenges and systemic gaps.

- The joint UN-U.S. GCTF Initiative is now drafting a GCTF Counterterrorism Watchlisting Toolkit, which will be a first-of-its kind international resource to help countries and organizations build, operate, and maintain more efficient and effective watchlist and terrorist screening infrastructures and further strengthen these nations as partners in our shared fight against terrorist travel.
- By providing recommendations on a range of topics related to establishing, managing, and monitoring a watchlist – including guidance on redress and oversight mechanisms – the Toolkit will leverage our collective expertise to provide a practical resource for States so they may develop and improve their counterterrorism watchlisting efforts to prevent terrorist travel.
- The Toolkit will also enhance the importance of international cooperation. Although watchlisting is implemented at the national level, in accordance with each country’s laws and security challenges, our individual efforts are strengthened by international collaboration and coordination, including the sharing of information.
- For example, information included in a watchlist is often derived from domestic sources and methods, but also may be a result of bilateral information sharing arrangements, international terrorist designations or sanctions, and/or multilateral/global information resources, such as INTERPOL.
- National security strategies should account for the need to share information across agencies. While some agencies may be reluctant to collaborate on watchlisting, once at the table, these agencies usually are impressed by the benefits of interagency information sharing. UN resolutions, such as resolution 2396, can serve as a catalyst for sovereign nations to approach watchlisting and screening in a unified manner and focus on generally agreed to principles and practices.
- Having an internationally endorsed counterterrorism watchlisting toolkit in wide circulation will give nations more confidence in each other’s watchlisting procedures and practices, which can increase bilateral and multilateral sharing of terrorism screening information.
- In closing, I wish to thank our colleagues at the United Nations for leveraging a “whole-of-the UN” approach in partnering with us on this GCTF Watchlisting Toolkit initiative. We have greatly benefitted from this nearly two-year project that helped advance and deepen ties between the UN and the GCTF and that addresses our most pressing global terrorism-related challenges. These efforts have the potential to greatly improve implementation of UNSCR 2396, promote international watchlisting standards, and provide nations with good practices to identify and interdict terrorists, including FTFs, as they attempt to travel.