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ON COUNTER-TERRORISM**

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Statement by Mr. Tarek Ladeb, Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations

Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States

Session V: The imperative of strengthening international and regional cooperation to counter-terrorism in the new decade

30 June 2021, 10 a.m.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

It is my honour to participate, as Chair of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee, in the Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States.

I would like to begin by thanking the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism for organizing this event, which reflects the continued commitment and efforts of the United Nations to enhance international and regional counter-terrorism cooperation.

Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), the founding pillar of the Council's fight against terrorism, calls upon Member States to cooperate, through bilateral or multilateral agreements, to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks and to take action against perpetrators of such acts.

In 2014, when the world faced an unprecedented flow of foreign terrorist fighters to the conflict zones, the Council emphasized, in its resolution 2178 (2014), the need to increase international cooperation in the detection of, and intervention against, inciters and recruiters, the prevention of travel, and the criminalization of terrorist travel and connected actions.

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Two years later, Security Council resolution 2322 (2016) reaffirmed that effective and appropriate international and regional cooperation in criminal matters was key to successful criminal justice responses to terrorism.

And the following year, Council resolution 2396 (2017) called on Member States to further cooperate, including through sharing best practices and technical expertise on relevant counter-terrorism issues, in accordance with domestic and international law.

The terrorism landscape is volatile and rapidly evolving and we are facing a terrorist threat that is transnational in nature and geographically diverse. The Covid-19 Pandemic has also brought huge impact, implication and complication to such challenge.

Many Member States are confronted by multiple challenges on multiple fronts.

International cooperation across each of these challenges therefore remains essential. Security Council resolutions reaffirmed such call on many occasions.

Around the globe, terrorists and terrorist groups continue to raise and transfer funds across borders, using both traditional means and emerging payment methods.

Those terrorism-financing methods include the abuse of virtual assets, prepaid cards, and mobile wallets.

The transnational nature of these activities presents significant challenges for States in their efforts to detect and intercept funds intended for terrorism-financing purposes.

Effective regional and international cooperation, at both the operational and strategic policy levels, is key.

States should also seek to enhance international cooperation in criminal cases involving the financing of terrorist activity, given the complexities involved in obtaining the necessary evidence.

States also face significant evidentiary hurdles in their efforts to collect and preserve evidence, and then secure its admission to the courts, particularly in the context of FTF returnees and relocators.

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The Committee stands in the forefront in addressing such new trends and challenges. In assisting States to overcome such challenges, the Committee, with the support of CTED, has identified relevant good practices and developed additional guidance, such as the 2015 Madrid Guiding Principles and its 2018 Addendum.

These key guidance documents include information on challenges relating to international judicial cooperation regarding FTFs, and on enhancing international judicial cooperation based on reciprocity or on a case-by-case basis, in the absence of applicable conventions or provisions.

In 2019, CTED drafted a set of "Guidelines to Facilitate the Use and the Admissibility as Evidence in National Criminal Courts of Information Collected, Handled, Preserved and Shared by the Military to Prosecute Terrorist Offences".

The Guidelines set forth recommended practices in this area, including promoting, as appropriate, and in accordance with international and national law, cooperation between civilian and military authorities, and adopting legislation allowing for information gathered by the military to be admitted as evidence in a prosecution.

The exchange of good practices and lessons learned is also crucial to the development of comprehensive and tailored prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration strategies, as called for by Council resolution 2396 (2017).

Establishing such strategies requires Member States to develop clear legal and policy frameworks with a solid foundation in the rule of law and human rights; adopt gender- and age-sensitive measures; tailor strategies to individual cases; and ensure a whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach.

The CTC and CTED continue to explore ways to assist Member States in these areas and to ensure that their efforts are conducted in compliance with international law — including international human rights law — and domestic legal regimes.

The recently published and updated "Practical Guide for Requesting Electronic Evidence Across Borders and new Standardized Direct Requests Forms" is one such example, which seeks to streamline requests to Communication Service Providers.

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In the area of law enforcement and border management, Member States' law enforcement and border agencies must adapt to an ever-evolving, global terrorist threat.

The CTC's assessment visits to Member States, conducted by CTED on behalf of the Committee, have found that, in many cases, law enforcement and border cooperation is not sufficiently proactive.

States should therefore seek to strengthen their cooperation in this area, particularly as States of the same region are often exposed to the same terrorist threat.

States are also encouraged to cooperate and share relevant information with and through regional and international organizations such as INTERPOL and its I-24/7 global communications system.

During the CTC's recent hybrid visits, many States demonstrated good progress in international and regional counter-terrorism cooperation, particularly in the areas of strengthening cooperation at the borders and the joint investigation of terrorism-related cases.

For example, the European Union made the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) a fully operational agency, with its own border guard corps.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, Governments have prioritized strengthened coordination and cooperation on counter-terrorism issues.

There is also a high level of regional cooperation between members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, including through agreements on customs and border-control matters.

In the Middle East, the League of Arab States has worked to establish the Arab Judicial Network to enhance subregional cooperation on criminal matters.

Even though insecurity continues to be a source of major concern in Africa — particularly in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel — there have been increased efforts to develop comprehensive regional approaches.

The Lake Chad Basin Commission's Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience seeks to address the growing threat of violent extremism and terrorism, including through the screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram.

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It also promotes a regional approach to dealing with the root causes of under-development and the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in the Lake Chad region.

The G5 Sahel Joint Force and its Police Component have embedded the principle of closer cooperation between the military and law enforcement.

This cooperation seeks to ensure respect for human rights and applicable international humanitarian law in the fight against terrorism.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

There remains a need to strengthen regional responses to the many challenges faced by Member States.

And regional cooperation must look beyond military cooperation.

Member States must also address the underlying conditions conducive to terrorism, as well as seeking sustainable peace.

Such cooperation should be complemented by, inter alia, judicial cooperation; measures to address underlying social insecurity through mutually effective rehabilitation and reintegration efforts; and economic development.

Council resolution 2396 (2017) calls for the responsible use of biometrics in order to identify terrorists, the collection and use of advance passenger information and Passenger Name Records data; greater connectivity to INTERPOL databases; and the screening and verification of travellers' identity against those tools.

However, when it comes to technology-based obligations, the implementation gap between States is much harder to bridge because of the high level of technological capabilities required to implement and maintain such measures and the lack of resources.

To ensure that States are not left behind, United Nations entities, Member States, and international and regional organizations must strengthen their focus on cooperation and coordination.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

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The global terrorist threat continues to evolve at a rapid pace and remains among the highest priorities of the Security Council.

This evolving threat, and terrorists' continued adaptation of strategies and methods, makes the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee more demanding and complex than ever. CTED close connection with its Global Research Network entities and its regular analytical products also suggest the complexity of the challenges we face and the collect efforts that we need to cope with them.

If we are to effectively address the increasing complexity of the threat, we must continue to develop and implement innovative approaches and tools.

And, above all, we must continue to strengthen our cooperation.

Terrorism affects us all.

No one State, organization, or institution can act alone in the face of this global threat.

It is therefore more essential than ever that we continue to work to strengthen and develop shared counter-terrorism structures and mechanisms.

I assure you that the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate will continue to work with their implementing partners to assist Member States in that process.

Thank you.