



# UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov**

**Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Briefing to the General Assembly on the report of the Secretary-General on Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

**3 March 2023**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Their Excellencies, Mr. Bob Rae, Permanent Representative of Canada, and Mr. Tarek Ladeb, Permanent Representative of Tunisia, the co-facilitators of the eighth biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, for their vision for and commitment to this process.

In its resolution 75/291, adopted on the seventh biennial review of the Strategy in June 2021, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on progress made by the United Nations in the implementation of the Strategy. And Ambassador Augustin Santos is together with us today, who was one of the writers of this resolution.

The report was prepared by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. To inform its preparation, we received inputs from 42 Member States, five regional organizations, 19 Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities and 23 civil society organizations. I thank all of those who participated in this process. It is very important that we are working together with civil society.

Excellencies,

The report highlights that the global terrorism landscape continues to evolve, with terrorists adapting to new realities that posing a more diffuse and diverse threat to international peace and security than ever before, as evidenced by an increase in the number of terrorist attacks that have been recorded recently.

Despite leadership losses, attrition within their cadres and successful efforts to curb their finances, the threat posed by terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida, Da'esh and their affiliates remains significant and has increased in and around conflict zones.

This is a deeply worrying trend.

The geographic diffusion of this threat across Africa is particularly concerning, as several groups hold pieces of territory and extend their reach to countries that had until recently not experienced terrorist violence.

To mobilize more international support for African Member States affected by terrorism and violent extremism and to reverse the worrying terrorist trend in parts of the continent, UNOCT and the Government of Nigeria will co-organize an African Counter-Terrorism Summit on the theme "Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Institution Building to Address the Evolving Threat of Terrorism in Africa" in Abuja, later this year.

Excellencies,

In Afghanistan, the Taliban have consolidated their administrative control, but not severed ties with Al-Qaida or subdued Da'esh's so-called Khorasan group, defying demands by the Security Council that Afghan territory not be used for terrorism.

Four years after the territorial defeat of Da'esh, the precarious situation in camps and detention facilities in the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic continues to have serious humanitarian, human rights, legal and security implications, which are likely to have far-reaching consequences in the mid-to-long-term. Outside conflict areas, the threat is lower, but still substantial.

Attacks by unaffiliated lone actors and small cells who are often motivated by transnational terrorist ideologies are the main concern, however the number of terrorists with battlefield experience who could relocate from conflict zones to their home, or third countries can pose a particularly lethal threat, whether on their own or in combination with purely domestic threats.

The use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, including use of uncrewed aerial systems for surveillance and reconnaissance, is also a key concern. While technology can be a powerful tool for counter-terrorism responses when based on the rule of law and anchored in human rights, terrorists continue to exploit the Internet and social media, online video games and gaming adjacent platforms, as well as encrypted apps, to extend the reach of their propaganda to radicalize and recruit new supporters.

In addition to Al-Qaida and Da'esh, Member States face the threat of terrorist attacks based on xenophobia, racism, and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief.

Excellencies,

In his report, the Secretary-General reminds Member States that they have the main responsibility to implement the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced manner across all four pillars of the Strategy. Experience has shown that responses that rely disproportionately on the use of force are not sufficient to curtail the threat.

The report also offers an overview of progress by the United Nations system in implementing the Strategy since the seventh review in 2021. Allow me to outline a few key points.

First, addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism continued to be a priority for the United Nations entities.

Our efforts spanned from developing guidance on the nexus between the prevention of violent extremism, hate speech and hate crimes, to supporting national action plans to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

We also sought to strengthen resilience at all levels and promote social cohesion to address root causes, with a particular focus on empowering young people through peer-to-peer approaches, as well as integrating behavioral insights, mental health, and psychosocial support in prevention efforts.

Second, measures to prevent and combat terrorism included efforts to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to support Member States in countering terrorist travel and cross-border movements, countering the financing of terrorism, denying terrorists access to small arms and light weapons, and addressing the threat posed by unmanned aerial systems when used by terrorist groups.

With the European Union and INTERPOL, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has launched the CT TECH initiative to strengthen law enforcement and criminal justice capacities to counter the misuse of new technologies by terrorists.

I welcome the Delhi Declaration on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, which the Security Council adopted during the Counter-Terrorism Committee's special meeting in India in October 2022.

Third, the Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia was supported by the United Nations and serves as an important example of regional measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard.

Accountability for terrorist crimes is essential, and we have continued to support Member States in Central Asia and other regions to address the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. This included capacity-building for law enforcement and the judiciary to investigate and prosecute

terrorist crimes, as well as reintegration and rehabilitation support for family members and other individuals with alleged links to terrorist groups.

Fourth, the entire United Nations system has continued to support counter-terrorism efforts that are gender-sensitive, based on the rule of law and firmly anchored in human rights and international law. Failure in this regard would generate less effective and even counterproductive results.

In 2022, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism established a dedicated Human Rights and Gender Section to provide technical assistance, oversight and quality assurance across the Office's policy, coordination, and programmatic functions.

We also continued to hold regular thematic roundtables with diverse civil society organizations and in May 2022, with Spain, we convened the first United Nations High-Level International Conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism in Málaga.

Last year in September, we organized in New York the first United Nations Global Congress on Victims of Terrorism.

Fifth, ensuring coherent and coordinated United Nations support to Member States remains a key priority.

Under the leadership of the Secretary-General, the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact comprises 45 entities, 1,000 focal points from 136 Member States, as well as 13 regional and international organizations.

Lastly, the report of the Secretary-General includes annexes responding to requests by the General Assembly during the seventh review of the Strategy, namely the findings of assessments on the need to further enhance the integration of the rule of law, human rights, and gender in counter-terrorism efforts, to ensure the comprehensive, balanced and integrated implementation of the Strategy.

Excellencies,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Member States for supporting the conversion of 25 existing Extra Budgetary posts of UNOCT to Regular Budget posts in December 2022, facilitating long-range planning and our mandated roles of policy, coordination, and coherence.

This would not have been possible without the significant advances and strong support to multilateral counter terrorism efforts that Member States adopted following the seventh review of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.

Even with these 25 new posts converted to the Regular Budget, UNOCT is still dependent on voluntary contributions for 91 percent of our budget.

To this end, let me also take this opportunity to put across my sincere gratitude to our funding partners first of all to the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whose generous voluntary contributions enable us to deliver our mandate. We will continue to seek to deepen our partnerships with current partners as we seek new ones. I repeat that without the support of Member States, we would not be able to deliver our mandate.

Excellencies,

In his report on “Our Common Agenda,” the Secretary-General outlined a convergence of global strategic risks, including terrorism, to be addressed in a new agenda for peace.

It is clear that the evolving threat of terrorism must be met by an evolution in multilateral counter-terrorism efforts.

The upcoming review of the Strategy represents a decisive moment to renew international attention on, and to bolster multilateral efforts to counter terrorism. Maintaining the long-standing General Assembly’s consensus behind the Strategy – consensus is the key word – would send a strong, positive message.

It would reaffirm the unity of Member States against terrorism, facilitate the delivery of technical assistance to countries most affected by this threat and strengthen the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture.

I Thank You for your attention.