



# HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON COUNTER-TERRORISM

#UNitetoCounterTerrorism

28-29 JUNE 2018

New York



## Concept Note

### Introduction

This note provides additional information on the four thematic sessions of the United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies, which will be convened by the United Nations Secretary-General at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 28 and 29 June 2018.

The overarching theme for the High-level Conference is “Strengthening international cooperation to combat the evolving threat of terrorism”. The four thematic sessions reflect the priorities of Member States to improve international counter-terrorism cooperation. Each session will also provide an opportunity to consider the practical implementation of relevant aspects of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that the General Assembly will review on 26 and 27 June 2018, including those elements pertaining to human rights, gender equality and engagement with youth and civil society.

The four plenary thematic sessions will be chaired by Heads of relevant United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities. The session chairs will make brief introductory statements before interventions from the floor. Heads of Delegation of Member States are invited to make maximum four-minute statements during one of the thematic sessions. Delegations are kindly requested to register their speaker by 15 June 2018 with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism ([christian.fassov@un.org](mailto:christian.fassov@un.org)), indicating in which session they would like to make a statement.

### High-level Session: Mobilising International Cooperation to Combat the Evolving Threat of Terrorism

Chair and  
keynote address: H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Other speakers: H.E. Mr. Kai Sauer, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations and Co-Facilitator of the Sixth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

H.E. Ms. Sima Bahous, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations and Co-Facilitator of the Sixth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy



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## Session I: Opportunities and Challenges in Strengthening International Cooperation through the Sharing of Information, Expertise and Resources

Terrorism continues to represent a major threat to international peace, security and development. As conflicts have grown in intensity and number over the past decade, terrorist attacks have spread and become more lethal, destroying societies and destabilizing entire regions. No country is completely immune from this threat, and no country can address this challenge alone. The complex and transnational nature of the financing, recruitment and planning of acts of terrorism requires a concerted multilateral effort at global, regional and national levels.

There is a strong international framework to counter terrorism through the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as nineteen international conventions and protocols and many regional and bilateral instruments. Since the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006, there have been many examples of Member States working together and establishing new coalitions, involving a wide range of actors, to coordinate their counter-terrorism efforts. However, much more can and needs to be done on practical and operational areas of cooperation, including the sharing of information. The United Nations Secretary-General has called for governments and security and law enforcement agencies to establish new channels of communication to collaborate effectively in fighting terrorism, while respecting human rights and humanitarian law.

This session will consider how to overcome the barriers that prevent the timely and effective sharing of critical and often secure information about identified or suspected transnational terrorists and their facilitators. Critical information includes, among others, biometric data, travel records and banking and financial information to assist law enforcement efforts to detect, identify, disrupt and prosecute terrorist networks before they carry out attacks. Member States are also encouraged to discuss how legal frameworks can be strengthened to allow efficient counter-terrorism cooperation and facilitate mutual legal assistance and extradition in terrorism related cases. This cooperation includes sharing evidence, including digital evidence, to enable the prosecution of terrorists and their networks.

The session will also consider best practices on sharing actionable information both between Member States and within Member States, as well as how to enhance Military to Law Enforcement Exchange (MILEX) so that military information acquired during operations can be turned into actionable information for law enforcement bodies, especially in regions such as the Sahel, West and East Africa, and parts of South-East Asia. Finally, the session will consider how counter-terrorism expertise and resources can be shared more effectively at the global, regional, sub-regional and bilateral levels, for example through joint training and capacity-building projects to leverage specific expertise and avoid the duplication of effort.

This session will address the following key questions:

- **How should Member States collect and share counter-terrorism information with each other in a consistent and secure way?**





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- **Are there ways to streamline multiple international information sharing channels to improve multilateral efforts to tackle terrorism? What are the best information sharing models at the bilateral and international levels?**
- **Is there value in establishing a Global Network of Counter-Terrorism Coordinators to take forward the implementation of a range of practical and operational measures to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation?**
- **Should Member States seek to agree on non-binding best practices on the collection, processing and sharing of terrorism-related information and evidence?**
- **How can Member States promote the sharing of expertise, resources and relevant information, including in the field, on the basis of United Nations gap analysis and needs assessments to implement relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions?**

## Session II: Combatting the Evolving Threat from Foreign Terrorist Fighters

The threat stemming from foreign terrorist fighters affects all Member States, even those far away from conflict zones. While an accurate count is not possible, reports suggest that at one stage over 40,000 foreign terrorist fighters from more than 110 countries may have travelled to join terrorist groups associated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida. These foreign terrorist fighters prolonged and complicated the conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, increased the brutality of the fighting and the frequency of human rights violations, including against women and girls.

Following the major military setbacks experienced by ISIL, the threat from foreign terrorist fighters has evolved. Many fighters have returned home or relocated to other countries such as Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan and the Philippines, which has fuelled existing conflicts and further destabilized fragile regions. Many returnees are well trained and equipped to carry out attacks in their own countries and are aiming to radicalize and recruit new followers to their cause. Others have rejected terrorist ideologies and no longer pose a threat to society. Among them are family members, including spouses and children, who accompanied foreign terrorist fighters and are now relocating or returning to their countries, which presents a range of specific challenges for Member States.

The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2396 (2017) in December 2017, which called on Member States to strengthen measures to prevent the transit of terrorists, including the use of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data and Advanced Passenger Information (API). It calls on Member States to notify other countries of the travel, arrival, deportation or detention of individuals whom they have reasonable grounds to believe are terrorists, as well as considering appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures for suspected terrorists and their accompanying family members. While emphasizing that Member States are obliged to bring to justice anyone who participates in



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terrorist acts, the resolution stresses the importance of assisting women or children associated with foreign terrorist fighters who might themselves be victims of terrorism.

This session will consider how Member States can work together to address the evolving threat from terrorist fighters, including strengthening border security and information sharing, building on the excellent work of INTERPOL and others in this area: today INTERPOL provides access to over 40,000 profiles, provided by more than 60 Member States across all regions.

This session will address the following key questions:

- **What are the practical and operational challenges to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017)? How can these be addressed?**
- **How can Member States harmonize the way that information on foreign terrorist fighters is collected and shared to prevent their travel?**
- **What are the best practices in collecting, handling, retaining and sharing evidence from conflict zones, which can be used to prosecute foreign terrorist fighters, in line with international law?**
- **How should Member States address legal challenges of returning foreign terrorist fighters in both custodial and non-custodial settings while fully complying with international law?**
- **How can Member States prevent foreign terrorist fighters transiting through and departing from their territories?**
- **How can Member States support the implementation of the United Nations Foreign Terrorist Fighters Capacity Building Implementation Plan at national, regional and global levels? How can the Plan be further adapted to support the implementation of Security Council resolution 2396 (2017)?**

## **Session III: Strengthening Global Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, including by Engaging Youth and Preventing Misuse of New Technologies and the Internet by Terrorists**

In resolution 70/291 on the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the General Assembly recognized the importance of preventing violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism and encouraged United Nations entities, in line with their mandates, to provide technical assistance to Member States upon their request. The resolution also invited Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations to consider developing national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, in accordance with their priorities and taking into account, as appropriate, the Secretary-General's Plan of Action. A growing number of Member States



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affected by terrorism have developed such plans and many have sought the support of the United Nations.

Civil society and private sector organizations play a vital role in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. Resolution 70/291 encouraged Member States to engage non-government actors, where appropriate, in developing tailored strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative. It also encouraged civil society to engage, as appropriate, in efforts to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including through interaction with Member States and the United Nations system.

Resolution 70/291 noted the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism, as well as for the promotion of peace and security. Terrorist and violent extremist groups often exploit feelings of disillusionment and alienation, offering a twisted sense of purpose to disaffected young people, including women and girls. In the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (60/288), Member States expressed their resolve to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, including prolonged unresolved conflicts, dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, lack of the rule of law and violations of human rights, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization and lack of good governance, while recognizing that none of these conditions can excuse or justify acts of terrorism.

Young people are an overwhelmingly positive asset to our societies with their idealism, creativity and dynamism. Resolution 70/291 encouraged Member States, United Nations entities, regional and sub-regional organizations and relevant actors to engage young people in promoting a culture of peace, tolerance and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The General Assembly also encouraged Member States to empower youth through the promotion of media and information literacy, by including young people in decision-making processes and the development of relevant programmes and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism.

Technological advances in recent years have made it easier for terrorists to spread propaganda and recruit followers online. They exploit social media, including encrypted communications and the dark web, to spread expertise, such as designs of improvised explosive devices and attack methodologies, as well as to coordinate and facilitate attacks. Other technological developments in the fields of artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology and drones may be misused by terrorists to expand the range and lethality of their attacks.

This session will address the following key questions:

- **How can civil society organizations contribute effectively to national efforts to prevent violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism?**
- **What are the experiences and best practices of Member States in developing national and regional plans of action to prevent violent extremism? How can**



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activities to prevent violent extremism be better developed to ensure they are consistent with Pillars I and IV of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy?

- Young people are a positive asset to society and are on the frontline of prevention. What are the good practices to prevent them from being radicalized and recruited by terrorists?
- Terrorists are increasingly using new technologies to promote their agenda and orchestrate their heinous acts. Which new technologies are being misused by terrorists and how can Member States prevent such abuses?
- How should the international community work together, while fully complying with human rights and international law, to prioritize the prosecution of those who use information and communications technologies for terrorist purposes?
- What are effective ways to counter terrorist propaganda, incitement and recruitment, including through the Internet and social media?

## Session IV: Strengthening the Role and Capacity of the United Nations to Support Member States to Implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Member States have the primary responsibility for countering terrorism. However, the United Nations has a key role to play in supporting Member States to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in an effective and balanced manner. This includes providing targeted capacity-building and technical assistance to countries, at their request, which are most affected by terrorism. The growing and changing needs of Member States requires the United Nations to prioritize its efforts based on a clear assessment of such needs and where it can add most value. The focus of United Nations support remains on delivering impact based on robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks which demonstrate tangible outcomes.

The United Nations Secretary-General has made countering terrorism one of his top priorities and supported the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which was established by General Assembly resolution 71/291 in June 2017, to provide strategic leadership to United Nations counter-terrorism efforts. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, which has been signed by the United Nations Secretary-General and 36 United Nations entities, plus INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, will ensure the United Nations adopts a coherent and coordinated approach to support Member States address the complex and evolving threat of terrorism. The Compact includes concrete commitments, such as promoting common United Nations action to counter terrorism, implementing mutually reinforcing counter-terrorism capacity-building projects and establishing a joint resource mobilization and outreach strategy with donors.







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Security Council resolution 2395 (2017) underscored the importance of strong coordination between the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, as they work within their mandates and in their distinct roles to ensure effective United Nations engagement with Member States to improve the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced manner. The resolution directed the two bodies to draft a joint report by 30 March 2018 setting out practical steps to ensure the incorporation of recommendations and analysis from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate into the work of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. This joint report was welcomed by the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee and published as Annex IV of the Report of the Secretary-General on 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy' (A/72/840).

This session will address the following key questions:

- **How should the United Nations further enhance its engagement with civil society to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism?**
- **How should the United Nations more effectively prioritize its counter-terrorism capacity-building and technical assistance to Member States to support the implementation of relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions?**
- **What should be the criteria to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations in supporting Member States to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions?**
- **In light of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, how can United Nations agencies, funds and programmes be best supported by Member States?**
- **How can Member States help streamline the roles and responsibilities of United Nations counter-terrorism entities?**
- **How can the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy be measured more effectively at global, regional and national levels?**
- **How should the United Nations engage with other international, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society and the private sector to enhance its support to Member States?**

## Closing Session: Action Agenda for New International Counter-Terrorism Partnerships

Chair's Summary and closing remarks: H.E. Mr. António Guterres,  
Secretary-General of the United Nations

