

2 August 2017

Statement of Mr. Jehangir Khan, Officer-in-Charge, UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT) at the Open Meeting of the Security Council on ‘Preventing Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons’

Mr. President,

I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing today’s meeting.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the excellent leadership shown by Egypt of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

I am sincerely grateful to ASG Laborde for his effective stewardship of CTED, with which the OCT enjoys an excellent relationship. We look forward to working closely with his successor.

Mr. President,

As this marks the first occasion that the OCT is briefing the Security Council since it was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/291, allow me to thank all 15 members for their strong support for this very first reform initiative of the Secretary-General.

Two weeks ago, OCT’s USG-designate Ambassador Vladimir Voronkov, met with the President of the Security Council and agreed to work closely on countering terrorism.

In proposing the establishment of the OCT, the Secretary-General expects that we strengthen our coordination efforts, in particular the “All-of-UN” approach to countering terrorism.

The Security Council mandated bodies, specifically CTED, the ISIL/AL Qaida Monitoring Team, and the 1540 Experts Group, will need to play a key role if we are to be successful in supporting Member States to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced manner.

Mr. President,

The specter of terrorists acquiring lethal technologies and new weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, poses a serious threat to international peace and security. For this reason, I welcome the consideration of today’s resolution on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons.

This initiative goes to the heart of the Secretary-General’s efforts to make prevention the core mission of the United Nations.

According to recent assessments made by Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities ODA and the Al-Qaida/ISIL Monitoring Team, the illicit manufacture and uncontrolled flow of arms, including their parts and ammunition, contribute significantly to terrorism and armed violence.

The diversion of weapons from government stockpiles either through theft, pilferage or capture of depots constitute an important source of supply of weapons to terrorist groups and other non-State actors.

In addition, terrorist organizations and foreign terrorist fighters rely on legal and illegal supply chains to procure parts, including for improvised explosive devices—or IEDs. The illicit online trade in weapons through the use of the “dark web” is particularly worrisome.

Over the years, terrorists have also improved their capabilities to design and manufacture IEDs out of commercially available ‘dual-use’ components.

Our focus, therefore, must not only be on preventing the illicit trade in arms, but also on ensuring that terrorist organizations cannot acquire essential components through legal or illegal commercial channels.

While ISIL has experienced challenges in obtaining high-quality equipment for weaponry because of sustained military pressure and shrinking income sources, they maintain some in-house ability to manufacture rocket launchers and IEDs on a large scale.

ISIL is also using commercially available drones in a variety of ways, from filming propaganda videos to observing targets to dropping small-scale explosives.

Mr. President,

A number of CTITF entities, including UNODC, CTED, ODA and Interpol are implementing valuable programmes to address this threat.

You just heard USG Fedotov on UNODC’s work to address illicit arms trafficking, the association between terrorism and different forms of organized crime, and the need to strengthen cross-border cooperation. You will soon be hearing separately from CTED and Interpol.

Other UN entities are also working in this field. For example, in the Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Somalia the UN Mine Action Service works in partnership with national authorities providing training and equipment for:

- marking, registering and storing of weapons;**
- building or refurbishing armories; and**
- helping clear and destruct explosive remnants of war, including IEDs.**

This prevents the potential recovery and reuse of these weapons by terrorists.

OCT's two constituent bodies – the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre – also help address this threat through CTITF's 12 inter-agency working groups and targeted capacity-building support.

I would like to mention three specific areas through which the OCT is making a contribution:

1. **First**, effective border control, especially of large, unmonitored spaces, is critical to preventing the flow of arms to terrorist groups.

To help law enforcement and border control agencies prioritize, institute and implement effective measures, the CTITF Working Group on Border Management and Law Enforcement spearheads a number of capacity building projects, including the UNCCT's Border Security Initiative, which was implemented with the Global Counterterrorism Forum—GCTF.

This project, which developed a number of best practices, will contribute in its next phase to stronger border controls through capacity building exercises aimed at reducing the risk of arms trafficking across borders in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

The OCT has also launched its Integrated Assistance for Counter-Terrorism (I-ACT) initiative in key regions and countries where the flow of arms represents a key challenge.

The G5 Sahel I-ACT, as mandated by Presidential Statement 2015/24, and the Mali and Nigeria I-ACTs are based on a mapping of capacity-building needs and, subsequently, the delivery of tailored capacity-building assistance against the four pillars of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy.

In the case of the I-ACT for the G5 Sahel, which includes Mali, border management and the prevention of trafficking of arms will be a key component.

2. **Second**, in the context of addressing the foreign terrorist fighters threat, UNCCT and ODA are implementing a project, co-funded by Switzerland, which is aimed at helping States in the Lake Chad Basin region address the illicit proliferation and diversion of small arms, light weapons and ammunition to non-State armed groups, including terrorist groups.

Additional trainings through ODA would help national authorities develop capacities to identify and interdict arms flows to FTFs.

This UNCCT-ODA project is part of the Security Council-mandated CTITF Capacity Building Implementation Plan for countering the flow of FTFs.

Taking an “All-of-UN” approach, the OCT developed the Plan which currently includes 50 mutually reinforcing capacity-building projects addressing the entire FTF life-cycle including radicalization, travel, financing, return, disarming, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration.

13 CTITF entities participate in this Plan, and the total of the project budgets is 107 million dollars over 5 years. Contributions and pledges currently add up to 44 million dollars or 41% of the total. We encourage Member States to contribute.

- 3. Third, the CTITF is active on addressing the threat of terrorists acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction. The recent use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups shows that this threat is not simply theoretical.**

The implementation of the obligations under Security Council resolutions 1540 and 2325 are vital to prevent non-State actors from acquiring and using nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. An effective response to a WMD attack is also crucial.

Through its specialized CTITF Working Group, UN agencies and international organizations are working to improve their coordination mechanisms in emergency responses to a chemical or biological attack.

This project has completed an analysis of existing UN coordination mechanisms and made recommendations for improvement, and also organized a simulation exercise that brought together 16 agencies to test their coordination in a hypothetical WMD terrorist attack situation.

Mr. President,

General Assembly Resolution 70/291 adopted during the Fifth Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy notes that Member States should work together to “...eliminate the supply of weapons, including small arms and light weapons, to terrorists, as well as prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in said weapons, including their diversion, to terrorists...”

The existing international legal framework against the flow of weapons to terrorists provides clear guidelines for all States in this regard.

Today’s draft resolution is another step in the right direction. We at OCT, through CTITF’s Inter-Agency Working Groups and UNCCT’s capacity-building assistance, will actively support its implementation, working closely with Member States and all relevant CTITF entities.

As called for by the Secretary-General in his report 71/858, we are committed to stepping up our UN assistance to Member States, and forging a new agenda for multilateral cooperation, including in countering the flow of weapons to terrorists.

Thank you●