Participants, in the breakout sessions focusing on national strategies, met over the last two days and considered four thematic topics pertaining to national strategies. These include the relevance of developing comprehensive national strategies, the principles on which they are built, the processes through which they are operationalized and the mechanisms with which they are sustained and made better.

Distinguished panelists, who led the breakout sessions, together with participants who made subsequent interventions during the discussions, shared with us national experiences and lessons learned, described how inter-departmental cooperation have worked and where States have encountered challenges.

Participants touched upon the following principles that are critical in the development of national strategies that are comprehensive and integrated. Some of these principles relate to the substance of the national strategy, the process of its adoption, the mechanism of its implementation and the procedures for its evaluation. Those various principles are as follows:

Overarching Principles:

• The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy serves as a valuable blueprint, embraced by all Member States of the United Nations, in providing a comprehensive and integrated approach against terrorism. The Global Strategy’s four pillars underscore different and critical ways to prevent terrorism and extremism, suppress terrorist movements, financing and activities, build national institutional capacities and uphold respect for human rights and the rule of law.

• In the development of national strategies, participants also highlighted the importance of regional counter-terrorism frameworks, strategies and conventions in developing national strategies. When national strategies are developed in conformity with regional strategies, the implementation of both the national and the regional strategies are facilitated.
• Analysis of the terrorist threat is a key point of departure when developing national counter-terrorism strategies. The strategy and plan should be context-specific and should respond to the threat perceived by the Government and other relevant stakeholders of society.
• In the development and implementation of national strategies, national leadership and local ownership are important aspects.
• The scope of a national strategy should be well-defined. An effective strategy includes clearly defined and achievable objectives.
• When developing national strategies, States should consider consulting other national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

Substantive Principles

• Law enforcement agencies play an essential role in the development of national counter-terrorism strategies, primarily because they are often found at the forefront in analyzing the threat, identifying immediate responses and mobilizing the necessary resources.
• Addressing factors conducive to the spread of terrorism, including extremism, radicalization, terrorist recruitment, are also essential components for developing an integrated and comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.
• Any national strategy must rest on a multi-disciplinary approach. Terrorism is rooted in many aspects and any effective counter-terrorism strategy must integrate elements beyond the law enforcement infrastructure and include socio-economic, political, educational, developmental, human rights and rule of law dimensions.
• Counter-terrorism strategies should also be premised on comprehensive national legislation which takes into account universal counter-terrorism legal obligations.
• It is also important that counter-terrorism responses are proportional to the threat and that responses are through a credible and independent criminal justice system.
• All national strategies should be in compliance with international human rights, humanitarian law and refugee law.

Procedural Principles

• A multidisciplinary counter-terrorism approach includes a variety of stakeholders. These stakeholders should include a range of governmental and non-governmental actors, as well as a broad partnership and consultations with them (such as with local communities, civil society organizations, the academia, the media and the private sector and the humanitarian organizations.) Such stakeholders should be involved and integrated in the development of a national strategy from the beginning, and that their participation is sustained consistently throughout any strategy’s implementation.
• Concerning internal coordination, national strategies need to be accompanied with implementing mechanisms.
• There should also be allocation of sufficient resources for the relevant agencies to carry out their tasks assigned to them in the implementation of the national strategy.

• Counter-terrorism coordinating bodies are important for coordinating counter-terrorism policies and strategies that respond to national, regional and international threats. These bodies are also an excellent conduit to consolidate international, regional and national strategies.

• Coordination on the policy level should also cascade downwards to the operational level. The operational coordination mechanism may vary and could focus on different themes, such as financing, investigations, law enforcement, border control etc.

• Evaluation of strategies would require regular monitoring of implementing mechanisms with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses and the ability of those mechanisms to meet desired objectives.

• The evaluation process should also be flexible enough to allow for meeting an evolving terrorist threat.
During the breakout sessions, which focused on regional counter-terrorism strategies, participants reemphasized that the universally adopted Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (Global Strategy, A/RES/66/10) provides an appropriate and well-accepted framework for counter-terrorism strategies.

The first session dealt with the understanding of regional dynamics and realities to develop regional strategies.

- As terrorist activities are rarely limited by territorial boundaries, participants noted that the nature of the multifaceted threat of terrorism requires regional cooperation. It was recognized that the development of regional strategies requires a comprehensive and integrated approach taking into account all relevant national and regional stakeholders not limited to governmental actors in general and law enforcement or intelligence agencies specifically.

- It was suggested that local ownership and tailored design are necessary for the success of regional strategies. Participants further mentioned that pertinent civil society organizations should be involved, especially, but not only, with regard to the prevention of terrorism laid down in Pillar I and human rights and rule of law addressed in Pillar IV of the Global Strategy.

The second session focused on principles to formulate regional strategies.

- Participants emphasized that the four pillars of the Global Strategy postulate an important source of principles for the development of regional counter-terrorism strategies. To effectively counter terrorism, participants stated that it is necessary to conduct a holistic assessment that considers the conditions conducive to the threat of terrorism for the development of regional strategies.

- Participants remarked that capacity building by regional organizations based on the Global Strategy’s pillars is useful and supporting effective measures
against terrorism. Many participants noted that measures against terrorism based on regional strategies must respect human rights and the rule of law.

The third session dealt with effective regional mechanisms to implement regional strategies.

- Participants drew attention to many different existing regional mechanisms worldwide. They noted that these mechanisms must reflect regional needs and realities to be effectively implemented on the regional and national level. Trust building between regional partners was seen as an essential requirement to foster lasting implementation of the strategies. Participants remarked that many of these mechanisms target conditions conducive to terrorism, focus on combating terrorism, designing and implementing capacity building programmes as well as the respect for human rights and the rule of law, including the reform and strengthening the criminal justice system.

- Participants noted that regional collaboration mechanisms in the field of border management and security, the exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned are particularly beneficial to the countering of terrorism. It was also remarked that well-maintained regional contact lists of national focal points can improve collaboration immensely. Participants also mentioned that inter-regional cooperation and sharing of experiences supports counter-terrorism efforts.

The fourth session focused on the review and evaluation of the implementation process of regional strategies.

- Throughout the breakout sessions, participants remarked that the continuous comprehensive monitoring and review of regional strategies is crucial to increase the effectiveness of counter-terrorism activities. Participants mentioned that well-defined strategy objectives, including success indicators, are conducive to evaluation assessments. Independent evaluation, peer-review between countries of the region and self-evaluation have been described as complimentary mechanisms.

- Participants also noted that achievements might relate to the signing and / or ratification of regional legal framework conventions that might, for example, criminalize specific behaviour or improve law enforcement or judicial action against terrorism. On the basis of such conventions, participants remarked, monitoring and evaluation of national strategies might take place on the regional level, including that all measures taken in this respect are respecting international law, including the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

In summary, participating officials from various governmental levels and agencies, regional and international organizations as well as civil society organizations agreed that regional counter-terrorism strategies are an effective tool to counter terrorism and are complementary to national strategies and the Global Strategy.