UNITED NATIONS ACTION TO COUNTER TERRORISM

Overview

As an assault on the principles of law and order, human rights and the peaceful settlement of disputes, terrorism runs counter to the very principles and purposes of the United Nations, as set out in its Charter. The Organization has for decades taken concrete steps to address the threat of terrorism, helping Member States to counter this scourge. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006) has further developed and strengthened those steps, bringing them into a focused concrete plan of action.

> "Together, we must demonstrate that we are up to the task. Whether we like it or not, our generation will go down in history as one that was challenged to protect the world form terrorism."
>
> Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's statement to the General Assembly, 16 February 2010.

Building a global legal framework to counter terrorism

One of the powerful achievements of the United Nations system has been the establishment of a regime of universal treaties and conventions against international terrorism. These treaties provide an international legal framework for the suppression of terrorist acts and the pursuit of perpetrators of terrorism as well as setting out ways to limit illicit access to some of the means that terrorists utilize. Sixteen universal legal instruments (thirteen instruments and three amendments) make up this legal framework. They contain measures against and a practical definition of a number of specific terrorist acts such as hijacking, hostage taking, bombing, and financing of terrorism. In addition, Member States are currently working to conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism that would also aim to craft a single, universally agreed definition of terrorism.

Strong legal foundations thus exist for countering terrorism; what is needed is for all Member States to become party to the international instruments and implement their provisions. The United Nations strongly promotes ratification and implementation of the existing conventions, not only monitoring implementation of the treaties by Member States, but also providing practical legal assistance for countries on how best to implement the provisions of the treaties into national legislation.

Member States through the General Assembly have been increasingly coordinating their counter-terrorism efforts and continuing their legal norm-setting work. Apart from formal treaties, countries also discuss ways and means to combat ter-

Supporting Victims of Terrorism

In the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Member States emphasize victims of terrorism and the importance of national systems of assistance that would address the needs of victims and their families. The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) plans to: 1) develop a virtual platform or web portal that can be used as a forum for victims, experts, government officials, service providers and civil society to share information, resources and best practices on supporting victims of terrorism. 2) develop a study/guide of best practices for providing financial support to victims of terrorism, based on existing national practices; 3) partner with the Center on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and the Global Survivor Network on a series of projects on supporting victims, starting from a media training programme for victims of terrorism; 4) convene in late 2010 a workshop on the rights of victims of terrorism and compile a study in this regard.

rorism on a regular basis and pledge their commitment to counter this menace through solemn declarations and resolutions of the General Assembly. The Security Council has also been active in countering terrorism through resolutions and by establishing several subsidiary bodies. At the same time, a number of programmes, offices and agencies of the United Nations system have been engaged in specific activities against terrorism, further assisting Member States in their counter-terrorism efforts.

Taking a strategic approach to counter terrorism

To consolidate and enhance the various streams of counter-terrorism related activity, Member States opened a new phase in their counter-terrorism efforts by agreeing on a United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288) in September 2006.

The Strategy, which marks the first time that all Member States of the United Nations agreed to a common strategic and operational framework to fight terrorism, forms a basis for a concrete plan of action to:

- address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism;
- prevent and combat terrorism;
- build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and
- ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the funda mental basis of the fight against terrorism.

The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy aims to bring together the counter-terrorism efforts of the various United Nations system entities, including the counter-terrorism-related bodies of the Security Council, into a common, coherent and more focused framework. The Strategy also gives support to the practical work of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), established by the Secretary-General in 2005 to ensure overall coordination and coherence in the counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations system. CTITF consists of 30 international entities , which – in addition to contributing to the counter-terrorism effort of the United Nations according to their own mandates – take part in CTITF's working groups and initiatives, involving areas of work where cooperation

Countering terrorism as part of the broader UN peace, development and human rights agenda

The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, through its four pillars, anchors the United Nations' counter-terrorism work firmly into the broad agenda of the Organization, which has its focus on maintaining international peace and security, promoting sustainable development and protecting human rights. Moving beyond preventing and combating terrorism solely through traditional legal and law enforcement contexts, Member States have recognized the need to take a comprehensive approach, thus complementing these more traditional measures with equal weight on addressing the conditions that may be conducive to terrorism's spread, building Member State capacities to prevent and combat terrorism and protecting human rights while countering terrorism. The prevention and resolution of conflicts; the promotion of the rule of law; the pursuit of development goals and objectives, including the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; the pursuit of social inclusion; support for education programmes; and the promotion of dialogue and tolerance, amongst others, have been recognized in the Strategy to be areas of key concern in both individual as well as common efforts to counter terrorism. The protection of human rights while combating terrorism has also received critical attention by Member States, who have placed this issue at the heart of the Strategy and by establishing the post of a special human rights investigator whose job it is precisely to ensure that human rights are not curtailed as countries take steps to counter terrorism.

among United Nations system actors can add value for the implementation of the Strategy.

Security Council actions and bodies

Among its measures, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy calls for Member States to implement all Security Council resolutions related to international terrorism and to cooperate fully with the counter-terrorism subsidiary bodies of the Security Council.

The Security Council has been dealing with terrorism-related issues nearly two decades. In the 1990s, its actions took the form of sanctions against States considered to be connected to certain acts of terrorism. In 1999, Security Council resolution 1267 established the 1267 Committee, which is tasked with monitoring sanctions against the Taliban (and subsequently Al-Qaida as of 2000). In 2001, following the 11 September terrorist attacks against the United States, the Security Council established a Counter-Terrorism Committee under resolution 1373. This resolution obliges Member States to take a number of measures to prevent terrorist activities and to criminalize various forms of terrorist actions, as well as to take measures that assist and promote cooperation among Member States. In 2004, the Security Council added a further counter-terrorism-related body to its arsenal: the 1540 Committee, which is tasked to monitor Member States' compliance with resolution 1540. Resolution 1540 calls on Member States to prevent non-State actors (including terrorist groups) from getting access to weapons of mass destruction. Through a number of additional resolutions, the Security Council has in the past years strengthened the work of its counter-terrorism bodies.

Condemning terrorist acts: the Secretary-General speaks out

Terrorism has become one of the main peace and security challenges on the agenda of secretaries-general in the past years. Through statements and reports, secretaries-general have been consistent in condemning terrorist acts as unacceptable and unjustifiable, calling on Member States to take a united front against such violence and positioning the United Nations system to take a central role in assisting Member States in their counter-terrorism efforts.

Continuing this tradition, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has consistently and forcefully condemned all acts of terrorism. He has made countering terrorism one of the priority areas of the Organization, with a strong focus on coordinated and comprehensive action by the United Nations system through the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. Secretary-General Ban has made it a special point to emphasize the human cost of terrorism and to focus on supporting victims of terrorism.

For more information please visit: www.un.org/terrorism
For details of actions taken by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) please visit: www.un.org/terrorism/cttaskforce

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