



## JOINT HIGH-LEVEL EVENT 'PROTECTING CHILDREN AFFECTED BY TERRORISM: A GLOBAL PRIORITY'

*New York, 30 September 2019 – The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) within the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) held a joint High-Level event on “Protecting Children Affected by Terrorism” on the margins of the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Japan to the United Nations.*

The international community has repeatedly raised concerns about the situation of children affected by terrorism. The United Nations Security Council has called upon Member States to assess and investigate individuals whom they have reasonable grounds to believe are “terrorists”, including suspected “foreign terrorist fighters” and their accompanying family members. Children are considered especially vulnerable in this context and in need of specialized support.

At the request of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, UNOCT coordinated an inter-agency effort to develop a set of [“Key Principles for the Protection, Repatriation, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Women and Children with Links to UN Listed Terrorist Groups,”](#) which provide guidance to the UN system in offering practical assistance to Member States. The Key Principles reiterate that all policies and actions affecting children should be firmly based on the principle of the “best interests of the child” as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that children must be seen first and foremost as victims.

The purpose of the event was to complement the Key Principles by launching the [UNCCT handbook on “Children Affected by the Foreign-Fighter Phenomenon: Ensuring a Child Rights-Based Approach,”](#) which was developed with the generous support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Kingdom of Belgium, and to present the [UNODC Comprehensive Training Package on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups](#), developed with the generous support of Japan.

In a statement delivered on behalf of His Excellency Ambassador Abdallah Al-Mouallimi Permanent Representative of the Kingdom Saudi Arabia to the United Nations and Chairman of the UNCCT Advisory Board, participants were reminded that “the existence of the Handbook will not alone result in better protection of the rights of children affected by the foreign-fighter phenomenon. The logical next step must be the extensive but well-coordinated dissemination of its content to the relevant actors and authorities within Member States, including through targeted training and sensitization programmes, by UN agencies, Member States, counter-terrorism experts, child rights and human rights practitioners.”

Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary General for Counter-Terrorism, who serves concurrently as Executive Director of UNCCT, underscored “how critical it is to ensure a human rights-based approach in the treatment of children affected by terrorism, and to ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration, to prevent them from being recruited by armed groups, including designated terrorist groups.” He expressed his hope that the Handbook “will help Member States to adopt such an approach, not only to address current challenges, but also to help secure a future free from terrorism.”

Mr. Masood Karimipour, speaking on behalf of UNODC, asserted that “if we aim to be effective, we must overcome the false dichotomy between security interests and child rights. These are complementary objectives. Society as a whole will be safer from terrorism when children are better protected, and vice-versa.”

During the High-Level Panel, representatives from several Permanent Missions and Delegations to the UN, along with Ms. Virginia Gamba from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, emphasized the necessity of ensuring the human rights-based treatment of children affected by terrorism, including the foreign-fighter phenomenon. The Expert Panel was comprised of UN partners, practitioners, and civil society representatives who provided first-hand perspectives of their work on children affected by terrorism.

UNOCT/UNCCT and UNODC share commitment and joined forces to support Member States that request assistance to address issues related to ensuring the human rights-based treatment of children affected by terrorism.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), was established in June 2017 to provide leadership on the implementation of General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates, to enhance coordination and coherence through the Global Counter-Terrorism Compact, and to strengthen the delivery of the United Nations counter-terrorism capacity building assistance to Member States, through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT).

UNODC was established in 1997 and is a global leader in the fight against terrorism, crime and illicit drugs. UNODC operates in all regions of the world through an extensive network of field offices.

*For More information:*

1. UNCCT handbook on “Children Affected by the Foreign-Fighter Phenomenon: Ensuring a Child Rights-Based Approach - [bit.ly/UNCCT\\_ChildrenFTF](https://bit.ly/UNCCT_ChildrenFTF) (Press contact [gerardl@un.org](mailto:gerardl@un.org), UNOCT)
2. UNOCT/UNCCT [Website](#)
3. UNODC-EndVAC [E-Press kit](#) (Press contact [H. Berche](#), UN Vienna)