Opportunities and challenges in strengthening international cooperation through the sharing of information, expertise and resources
Remarks by Alison August Treppel, Executive Secretary, Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE)
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His Excellency, Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations
Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the Office of Counter-Terrorism
Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate,
Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism represents one of the main threats to international peace and security today. The serious and growing threats posed by violent extremism leading to terrorism, as well as foreign terrorist combatants returning to their countries of origin or nationality or moving to third countries, are complex phenomena that demand that we reconsider existing strategies for preventing terrorism as we know it today, and offer effective and vigorous responses to counter this scourge.

Madame Chairperson,

While the responsibility to prevent and counter terrorism lies principally with the Member States, it is also true that this challenge cannot be addressed solely by governments and must involve all sectors of society.

We know that only a coordinated solution among these numerous actors will be effective in neutralizing and weakening the terrorist threat. Yet therein lies perhaps our biggest challenge of all – while routinely touted as critical components of any strategy, consistent coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders has historically been difficult to achieve.

Madame Chairperson,

Regional organizations are valuable partners in the global fight against terrorism, and play a strategic role in fostering and deepening cooperation efforts. Regional organizations have a deeper understanding of the dynamics and realities of their Member States, and are instrumental in strengthening implementation of international obligations by promoting buy in and a sense of ownership by governments.
Cognizant of this fact, the Member States of the Organization of American States created the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) in 1999 as the principal regional forum to promote cooperation and information sharing to prevent and counter terrorism throughout the Americas.

The annual CICTE meeting brings together the region’s top counter terrorism experts to share expertise, information and good practices on a number of topics affecting the Hemisphere, including terrorism financing and proliferation of WMD, protection of critical infrastructure and most recently, violent extremism that is conducive to terrorism. Agreed-upon measures and practices are reflected in a Declaration that helps to shape national counter terrorism priorities and practices.


OAS has also formed strategic partnerships, such as the so-called MECOOR, partnership between CICTE, UNCTED, the Terrorism Prevention Branch of UNODC, the Latin America Financial Action Task Force (GAFILAT) and the Anti-Money Laundering Unit of the Inter-American Commission on Drug Abuse Control (OAS/SMS/CICAD), considered an international best practice, as well as an innovative and effective model of cooperation between international and regional organizations in the delivery of legislative assistance and capacity building to enhance coordination, find synergies, and leverage and strengthen counter-terrorism efforts in the Hemisphere.

CICTE has also implemented capacity-building and legislative assistance projects to assist OAS Member States to adopt and update counter-terrorism legislation and build capacity of their criminal justice systems. As a result, a number of OAS Member States have already updated or are in the process of updating their counter-terrorism legal frameworks.

Madame Chairperson,

Allow me to outline some recommendations to fulfill the provisions of UNSC resolutions in the main areas of action to strengthen international cooperation to counter terrorism:

- The legal dimension of the implementation of UNSC resolutions must be a pillar in the context of national, sub-regional and regional counter-terrorism strategies. Having adequate laws in place is an essential element to address the phenomenon of foreign fighters effectively and criminalize the recruitment for a terrorist cause, the incitement to terrorism, providing and/or receiving of terrorist training, travel or the attempt to travel for terrorist purposes, the use of new communication technologies to that end and the financing of these travels or activities, as well as tackling the linkages between terrorism and transnational organized crime.
Regional cooperation is a fundamental tool to achieve these goals and the role of regional organizations in this regard should be instrumental in supporting national counter-terrorism efforts. Harmonized criminalization of foreign terrorist fighter offenses across the region would facilitate cross-border cooperation and even mechanisms in place would avoid safe havens for terrorists and/or their facilitators, while differences in criminalization without common minimum standards risk prosecution gaps and difficult extradition procedures, mutual legal assistance and information exchange.

To achieve strong and enforceable counter-terrorism legal regimes, countries must adopt effective border controls, issue secure travel documents, with the corollary need to exchange operational information concerning terrorists and expand criminal investigations and prosecutions to include the use of intelligence as admissible evidence and special investigation techniques.

Law enforcement is a powerful instrument, but it cannot be the only tool. Countries must also develop ways to reach individuals early on their path toward radicalization and counter violent extremism, as well as support the reintegration of de-radicalized persons convicted of terrorist acts, promoting alternatives based on education and dialogue. In this area, it is important to highlight the role that the victims can play in countering the appeal of terrorism and the disqualifier effect of their narratives on violent extremism and radicalization.

Madame Chairperson,

CICTE’s regional network of experts, as well as the annual meeting that brings them together, could serve as a model for counter terrorism practitioners in other regions. The face-to-face component of the meeting, while admittedly more costly than virtual platforms helps to foster the relationships and partnerships that are so critical for confidence building and timely information sharing.

For this reason, we are particularly grateful for the organization of this event, and encourage the establishment of a platform through which regional organizations could regularly share information, lessons learned and effective practices. Because by knowing our counterparts, and by speaking with them on a regular basis, we will be more likely to coordinate and not duplicate efforts; to learn from and facilitate positive experiences; and to increase our global commitment to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Thank you.