



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

Security Council meeting on the sixth “Report of the Secretary- General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat”

8 February 2018, 10 a.m.

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to start by expressing my solidarity with the people and Governments where recent terror attacks took place – the list is long and includes Afghanistan, Cameroon, Iraq, Nigeria, the Philippines and Somalia – our prayers are with the victims and the survivors of these heinous attacks.

I also call on all Member States to redouble their efforts to strengthen international cooperation to address terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, and bring those responsible for these acts to justice.

Mr. President,

Thank you for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the sixth “Report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat”.

This report was prepared with the input of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, and in close collaboration with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and other United Nations entities and international organizations.

Mr. President,

The fight against ISIL is entering a new phase. This sixth report shows that despite the significant military setbacks experienced by ISIL in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and the

southern Philippines last year, the group and its affiliates continue to pose a significant and evolving threat around the world.

The report states that ISIL is no longer focused on conquering and holding territory. It has been forced to adapt and focus primarily on smaller and more motivated groups of individuals who remain committed to inspiring, enabling and carrying out attacks. It is now organized as a global network with a flat hierarchy and less operational control over its affiliates.

Although it is difficult to assess with confidence the number of foreign terrorist fighters who remain in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, the flow of fighters to both countries has nearly come to a halt. However, returning foreign terrorist fighters, and those who relocate to other regions, continue to present a considerable threat to international security.

The report indicates that the structure of ISIL's global propaganda machinery and the quantity and quality of its output continue to deteriorate. However, ISIL members and sympathizers are still able to use social media, including encryption technology and communication tools within the dark web, to communicate, coordinate and facilitate attacks.

ISIL's ability to generate revenues has been considerably weakened, largely owing to the group's loss of control over oil and gas fields in the Syrian Arab Republic. ISIL's revenues have fallen by more than 90 per cent since 2015.

However, ISIL is still able to generate income through extortion and control of checkpoints. A key concern is how to allow reconstruction and stabilization funds to flow into areas liberated from ISIL, while preventing these much-needed funds from ending up in ISIL's hands.

ISIL continues to fund its affiliates, who are increasingly looking for ways to diversify their income and become financially independent. Money services, including exchange houses and money couriers, continue to be a preferred method for ISIL and its supporters to move funds across borders.

In regard to ISIL's evolving threat outside of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, its affiliates in Egypt have shown considerable resilience and pose a growing threat. ISIL remains determined to rebuild its capabilities in Libya and it continues to carry out sporadic attacks.

In West Africa, ISIL-related groups continue to operate in Mali and neighbouring countries. In East Africa, ISIL affiliates operating in Puntland and southern Somalia complicate the threat posed by Al-Qaida's affiliate, Al-Shabaab.

Despite having been further degraded by Afghan and international military operations, ISIL in Afghanistan continues to mount aggressive attacks, especially in Kabul. ISIL affiliates have suffered significant setbacks in South-East Asia, most notably the loss of Marawi City in the southern Philippines.

Mr. President,

The rapidly evolving and transnational threat from ISIL presents a difficult challenge for Member States and the international community and underlines the vital importance of sharing

information on the identity of returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters. The ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions List remains one of the key global instruments in this regard.

I welcome the efforts of this Council over the past months to adopt several resolutions to help counter terrorist narratives; prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons; address the issue of accountability for crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq; disrupt human trafficking carried out by terrorist groups; and address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters through measures on border security, information-sharing and criminal justice. The focus now needs to be on implementing these new global norms.

Member States, the United Nations and international, regional and sub-regional organizations continue to strengthen existing tools, while also developing new ones, to address the evolving threat posed by ISIL.

Innovative partnerships between government agencies and private sector actors have strengthened the sharing of sensitive information on terrorism-financing patterns and suspect individuals. Many Member States are paying increasing attention to prosecution strategies and rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

The United Nations Foreign Terrorist Fighters Capacity Building Implementation Plan continues to evolve to address the full cycle of fighters: thirty-five of the fifty projects in the plan have been either completed or are being implemented.

However, it is not the time for complacency. We need to stay one step ahead of ISIL as the group continues to adapt and evolve. I would like to make four concluding observations.

First, we already have a strong international framework to counter the threat from ISIL, through the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as nineteen international counter-terrorism conventions and many regional instruments.

The international effort to combat ISIL would be greatly enhanced by the effective implementation of these existing resolutions and legal counter-terrorism instruments, conventions and protocols. The United Nations stands ready to provide assistance to Member States in this regard when requested.

Second, the international community needs to address the deficit in counter-terrorism cooperation at the global, regional and national levels. The Secretary-General will convene the first-ever United Nations Summit of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States in June to enhance cooperation, the exchange of information in a timely and secure manner, and develop new and innovative ways to tackle terrorism.

Third, addressing the threat posed by ISIL requires addressing the underlying conditions that cause young men and women to be lured by violent extremists. Most new recruits to terrorist organizations are between 17 and 27 years old. Extremist groups exploit feelings of disillusionment and alienation, offering a twisted sense of purpose to disaffected young people. The Summit will therefore also discuss how to engage and empower young people to help prevent violent extremism.

Fourth, this is the first Secretary-General report on the threat posed by ISIL since the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism. Last week, the Secretary-General approved the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, which will help to deliver one of his key priorities of strengthening the coordination and coherence of the counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations system. We are committed to stepping up our capacity building support to all Member States to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. President,

The fight against ISIL and its affiliates is far from over. While there have been significant military successes over the past eight months, this remains a truly global challenge that demands an urgent and concerted multilateral response.

The Secretary-General welcomes the focus that the Security Council has put on this matter, and urges you to continue your efforts to further enhance multilateral cooperation to address the threats and challenges contained in this report.

Thank you, Mr. President.