

High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies

“Opportunities and challenges in strengthening international cooperation through the sharing of information, expertise and resources”

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Statement of

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Terrorism in 2018 is transnational. Many terrorist activities transcend jurisdictions and borders, including digital ones.

That is why the Secretary-General has identified stronger international cooperation as our number one counter-terrorism priority.

In a globalized world, the failings of one State can quickly become a threat to all nations.

As the terrorist threat evolves, counter-terrorism cooperation must also evolve. It needs to be swifter, occur across regions

and between multiple levels of Government, and involve non-traditional actors, including the private sector.

However, our quest for better and faster cooperation should never undermine human rights and the rule of law.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

We shall be discussing three key issues in this session:

- **Information-sharing;**
- **Sharing of expertise; and**
- **Related efforts to strengthen law enforcement and criminal justice cooperation.**

Timely access to critical information about identified or suspected terrorist activity is central to our counter-terrorism efforts.

This includes intelligence, biometric data, advance passenger information, Passenger Name Records, and financial information.

If this information is not shared, is not shared quickly enough, or with the right authorities, there can be tragic consequences.

There are many potential barriers to sharing information at the national, regional or international levels, but the central issue is trust.

No-one will share information without trust, or if they believe that doing so may have negative consequences.

That is why it is imperative to respect human rights when sharing information.

It is not only morally and legally right to do so, it is also an essential element of effective and sustainable cooperation.

Even where trust does exist, capacity restraints can undermine efforts to receive and collect information, and to strengthen cooperation.

Not all Member States have the capacity or resources to implement the measures required to counter terrorism effectively.

Each Member State faces unique challenges, has different strengths, different experiences, and different capacity or resource levels.

That is why we must also share our expertise, and work to strengthen each other's capabilities.

Despite these challenges, we have made significant progress in strengthening information and expertise sharing, and in strengthening cooperation at all levels.

The Secretary General has made UN counter-terrorism reform one of his priorities, and has established the UN Office

of Counter-Terrorism to strengthen the coordination of UN counter-terrorism efforts.

Since becoming CTED Executive Director, last November, I have also taken steps to improve our coordination with our UN partners.

We are determined to ensure that we continue to act as “One UN” and that our efforts continue to be effectively aligned, including within the framework of further joint visits to other priority States and regions. CTED is also a signatory to the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

At the regional level, the UNODC Judicial Sahel platform is one of several initiatives aimed at improving information-sharing between judges and prosecutors.

Cross-regional cooperation is also crucial. CTED and UNODC support the EUROMED Justice programme, which aims to promote cooperation at both the Mediterranean and Euro-Mediterranean levels.

For operational counter-terrorism cooperation however, bilateral engagement is critical. We have seen some progress in this area, but much more needs to be done.

Returning and relocating FTFs and their accompanying family members pose a significant challenge, which requires prosecutors and investigators to handle complex cases using evidence from multiple sources and jurisdictions.

We have a solid international legal framework that provides an effective legal foundation for the investigation and prosecution of terrorist cases.

Ratification and implementation of these core international conventions is crucial.

Yet more laws and policies are not a panacea. States also need to ensure full and effective implementation of laws and policies by knowledgeable and experienced officials.

CTED is uniquely mandated to assess Member States' responses to the terrorist threat and to conduct ongoing analysis of emerging trends and good practices.

One example of both a good practice and a trend is information-sharing between Member States and less traditional partners.

CTED works to facilitate that cooperation through several initiatives.

Through the *Tech against Terrorism* initiative, for example, CTED has brought the world's leading tech companies together via the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

In many of the Member States we visit on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, civil society organizations play a critical role in CVE programming.

And through our Global Research Network, we're helping to bring the latest evidence-based research to the attention of counter-terrorism policymakers.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

The complexity of the current terrorism landscape compels us all to rethink our approaches. The days of relying on traditional contacts and networks for cooperation and information-sharing are over.

Today, we need instant, reliable access to a broad range of networks; we need to engage with multiple stakeholders in different languages; and we need to understand how new technologies are being exploited by terrorists.

I look forward to our discussions.