



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Statement by Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and Director of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism,

Quarterly Briefing to Member States by United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Entities

11 December 2019, 3 PM

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you very much for attending this last Quarterly Briefing for 2019. I welcome you on behalf of Under-Secretary-General Voronkov who was unable to chair the meeting due to other commitments.

I would also like to thank my colleagues from other Global Compact entities for joining us this for this meeting.

Reflecting on what has happened this year, I am struck by how the threat of terrorism continues to evolve.

ISIL remains a critical and central concern. Despite its territorial collapse and loss of its founding leader, the group still aspires to global relevance through its regional affiliates and inspired attacks.

Al-Qaeda also remains resilient and its affiliates are in fact stronger than ISIL's in Syria's Idlib province, Yemen, Somalia and large part of West Africa.

At the same time, violent far-right and supremacist groups and lone individuals pose a growing terrorist threat to many countries, as we saw in March in Christchurch, New Zealand, El Paso, U.S.A. and elsewhere.

I would like to express my solidarity with all countries that have suffered from terrorist attacks. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families, including among UN personnel.

All of this must further strengthen our determination and joint efforts to address the threat of terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations.

UNOCT's work this year has been focused on galvanizing international cooperation to counter terrorism, building on the outcomes from the 6th Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the first UN High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States last year.

Today I would like to focus my briefing today on progress made in five key areas: (1) our Regional High-Level Conferences, (2) the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, (3) the Global Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, (4) our Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme, and (5) Support to Victims of Terrorism.

First, we already held five successful Regional High-Level Conferences earlier this year, in partnership with the Governments of Tajikistan, Mongolia, Kenya, Belarus and Hungary, as was offered by Secretary-General Guterres.

Next week, we will hold the sixth regional conference with the United Arab Emirates on the theme of "Empowering Youth and Promoting Tolerance: Practical Approaches to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism".

The conference in Abu Dhabi will be the first held in the Arab region, and the first primarily focused on youth. It will bring together over 300 representatives primarily from League of Arab States countries, as well as UN agencies and entities, civil society, youth representatives, religious and inter-faith organizations and leading think tanks to exchange views and share experiences from across the Middle East and North Africa region.

The conference will be preceded by a one-day workshop for civil society and led by civil society, illustrating UNOCT's commitment to practically strengthen its engagement with civil society – another outcome from our high-level conference last year.

A similar workshop will be convened before our next regional conference in Vienna, in February next year, with the OSCE and Switzerland on the evolving threat from foreign terrorist fighters.

The proceedings from these workshops – and discussion on the role of civil society during all regional conferences – will inform the preparation of a Report on civil society engagement to be presented during our Second United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week.

The conference in Abu Dhabi that I mentioned follows on the heels of the successful regional we held with Hungary just last month in Budapest on "Prevention of Radicalization to Terrorism: Regional Policy Responses and Risk Mitigation".

We had over 200 participants from 61 Member States, international and regional organizations, UN entities, civil society, academia and the private sector.

The Conference's key conclusions included the need for increased efforts to:

- (i) Importance of Sharing good practices and lessons learned to prevent radicalization;
- (ii) Address conditions that fuel the lure of terrorism;
- (iii) Adopt "whole-of-society" approaches to prevent and counter terrorism;
- (iv) Engage young people to help shape counter-terrorism strategies;
- (v) Increase support to victims and survivors of terrorism; and finally,
- (vi) Discuss the dynamics between migration and security, while recognizing that migration that does not directly contribute to terrorism, which in itself is a complex multidisciplinary phenomenon.

We are also pleased to have concluded a Host Country Agreement with the Government of Hungary to establish a UNOCT Programme Support Office in Budapest. The strategic location of this support office will help us meet Member States' requests for support on countering terrorist travel and other capacity building programme, ensuring significant savings and travel efficiencies.

UNOCT is looking forward to holding regional conferences with the OSCE in February and with CARICOM countries in March.

All these Regional Conferences will feed into the Second United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, which will take place on 1-2 July 2020 during our Second UN Counter-Terrorism Week.

I would like to now briefly highlight the significant progress we achieved this year in setting the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact into motion.

The Compact Task Force has continued to grow, and we welcomed four new entities – the UN Staff System College (UNSSC), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, and lastly the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Compact Coordination Committee met three times under the chairmanship of Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and adopted its first biennial joint programme of work to implement the Compact.

The Coordination Committee endorsed the revitalization of our interagency working groups on counter-terrorism, streamlined from twelve down to eight, and adopted their new terms of reference and work plans.

The working groups have been working in earnest to implement these work plans and report to the Coordination Committee on their progress in sharing information and fostering coherent approaches, coordinating capacity building efforts and developing joint initiatives, as well as implementing a number of joint projects, some supported through catalytic funding provided by UNOCT.

My colleague Ms. Sevil Alirzayeva will brief you later on the important work that has been done by the Resource Mobilization and Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, which she co-chairs with CTED and UNODC, and which is currently mapping of UN counter-terrorism efforts and their alignment with CTED recommendations.

I also look forward to the briefings by my Global Compact colleagues later in this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the rest of my remarks, I wanted to discuss some of the new ground we broke and important strides we made in 2019 in strengthening our capacity-building efforts.

The UN Counter-Terrorism Centre plays a critical and growing role in this regard within UNOCT, and Mr. Steven Siqueira will provide some more details afterwards.

We have increased our work and programming in regions such as South East Asia and Africa, while we continued our support in Central Asia and other regions, supporting some of the countries most affected by terrorism, including Mali, Iraq and stepping up support to vulnerable countries, such as Niger and Burkina Faso.

Let me now highlight three particular global programmes each under a different pillar of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

First, the Global Countering Terrorist Travel Programme – under the Strategy’s second pillar – which was launched by the Secretary-General in May.

As you know, this a major multi-agency initiative in which UNOCT, CTED, UNODC, OICT and INTERPOL are joining hands to help Member States implement API/PNR systems in line with Security Council resolutions 2396.

We have already confirmed the interest of 31 Member States to participate in the programme. I just return together with a number of my colleagues from a joint visit to Sudan during which we discussed with the Government the provision of tailored support and heard the Government’s strong commitment to increase its cooperation on counter-terrorism issues with the United Nations.

As mentioned earlier the new support office in Budapest, the Countering Terrorist Travel programme will have greater proximity to participating Member States; run more cost efficiently; and improve programme delivery. The support office will also include a training academy to provide a hands-on learning environment.

The Programme will also help Member States establish Regional Informal Working Groups to promote information exchange and share good practices and lessons learned, which would further enhance national capabilities.

Second, and falling under the first pillar of the Strategy, UNOCT initiated in June through UNCCT a new Global Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme, which also supports the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2250 and 2419, the UN Youth Strategy and the UN PVE Plan of Action.

This programme builds on previous youth-related activities of the Centre to provide a strategic long-term framework for capacity-building support in engaging and empowering youth in PCVE-efforts.

It aims to promote the positive contribution of youth in these efforts, as well as to establish formal mechanisms through which young people can participate meaningfully in the development and delivery of relevant policies, action plans and programmes.

Third, our Global Victims of Terrorism Support Programme remained a core priority for our office and UNCT.

We successfully commemorated on 21 August for the second time the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, in the presence of the Secretary-General.

We are hoping to count on continued strong support from Member States, and the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism established this year under the leadership of Afghanistan and Spain, as we look ahead to convening next year the first UN Congress of Victims of Terrorism during the UN Counter-Terrorism Week, on 30th of June.

In summary, it is clear from developments in 2019 that the threat from terrorism is not waning. If anything, it is diversifying and there is a growing sense of urgency with regard to several global and regional challenges.

Throughout the year, the Secretary-General and the United Nations have repeatedly expressed concern over the situation of people, especially women and children, stranded in camps in Iraq and Syria who are facing dire humanitarian situations.

UNOCT previously briefed Member States on the adoption of key principles and key messages to guide the response of the UN system regarding the issue of women and children with links to UN-listed terrorist groups.

The UN system stands ready to support Member States which are taking responsibility for their nationals in Al-Hol and other camps in Syria. In particular, we are looking at what supportive role the UN can play to facilitate repatriations, especially of children and women, to their home countries.

Next year will be a new milestone for the United Nations' counter-terrorism efforts. We look forward to the Second UN Counter-Terrorism Week from 29 June to 2 July, and we count on Member States' full support for the 7th Biennial Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the first-ever UN Congress of Victims of Terrorism, and the second UN High-Level Meeting of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies.

These events will provide the strategic direction and guidance for our work in the next two years.

As 2019 comes to an end, it would be remiss if I did not thank all UNOCT's partner countries and donors for their contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism, and their collaboration in delivering our activities.

Your support and guidance is indispensable so that we may more effectively support you and your fellow Member States in your efforts to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Thank you.