



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

Summary Conclusions

**Joint United Nations – OSCE-Switzerland Regional Conference
On Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Addressing current challenges**

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

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Your Excellency, Mr. Thomas Greminger, Secretary-General of the OSCE

Your Excellency, Mr. Wolfgang Amadeus Brühlhart, Ambassador of Switzerland to the OSCE,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First and foremost, allow me to reiterate my deep gratitude to the Government of Switzerland and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for having co-organized this important Conference with the United Nations, in cooperation with the Albanian OSCE Chairmanship.

I would also like to thank those who have contributed to the success of this landmark conference through their leadership, participation and financial contributions.

I am pleased to acknowledge participation of more than four hundred and thirty-eight (438) representatives from 40 Member States, and a number of UN entities, international and regional organisations, as well as 38 civil society organizations in the Conference.

It is important to note that we had seven remarkable side-events during the Conference focusing on the global terrorist threat and challenges related to returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters and their family members. These side events were a complement to the main programme of the Conference, amplifying its core agenda.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past few years, foreign terrorist fighters of ISIL and Al-Qaida have posed an unprecedented threat to international peace and security. Last week, I presented together with Assistant Secretary-General Coninx of CTED the tenth report of the Secretary-General on the

threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to the Security Council that was drafted with concrete inputs from the Al-Qaida/ISIL Monitoring Team.

ISIL is resurgent as a covert network in Iraq and Syria. Thousands of foreign terrorist fighters remain at large, posing a threat to Iraq, Syria, and the countries they might return or relocate to. Our discussions during the two days of the Conference have confirmed this concern.

Allow me to share with you key conclusions of these discussions:

First – International and Regional Cooperation

All sessions of the conference underlined the need to further strengthen international, regional and bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation.

This year, we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, which serves as a platform for national, regional and international peace and security efforts, including the fight against terrorism.

The United Nations and my Office will continue to advocate and facilitate international counter-terrorism cooperation within its given mandate, together with our international and regional partners such as the OSCE, the European Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, INTERPOL, Global Counterterrorism Forum, and others.

During these discussions, many participants highlighted centrality of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and emphasized on the balance implementation of all its pillars.

Allow me to highlight as a vivid example of these collective efforts the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, implemented by United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia and my Office, which could serve as a model for collaboration in other regions.

We are also working closely with the Arab Interior Ministers Council to strengthen Arab countries' measures to effectively counter terrorism using the Joint Plan of Action as a model.

Second - Addressing needs of children linked to Terrorist Groups

Participants stressed the urgent need for Member States to address the needs of children linked with terrorist groups through gender- and age- sensitive programmes.

Thousands of children remain trapped in Syria and Iraq. They face a multitude of challenges, including rejection and life-long stigmatization.

Member States have the primary responsibility to address the plight of their nationals, including children trapped in conflict zones.

Children should always be seen as victims and efforts to address their plight should be based on the best interest of the child.

At the direction of the Secretary-General, UNOCT together with other United Nations entities developed a set of Key Principles for the UN system, for the protection, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children with links to United Nations listed terrorist groups.

Member States can find additional guidance in the Handbook published last September by my Office on “Children affected by the foreign fighter phenomenon: Ensuring a child rights-based approach”.

Third - Enhancing Member States Capacities

Participants underscored the need to further enhance Member States’ capacities to prevent, detect and disrupt the travel of foreign terrorist fighters, in accordance with international law.

Both the OSCE and the UN are helping countries adopt and use Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data systems.

The UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme is a flagship demonstration of how the UN system, jointly with INTERPOL and with the support of our donors, such as the State of Qatar, the Netherlands, and the European Union, is working as one to mobilize resources and expertise to provide tailored, impactful assistance to Member States.

The Conference underscored the need to train border and law enforcement officials, and highlighted the OSCE Mobile Training Team on foreign terrorist fighters as an innovative approach which could be applied outside the OSCE area and in other fields.

Participants recalled that the use of tools and processes to collect, store and share information should comply with international human rights standards, including the right to privacy and non-discrimination.

In 2018, through the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact, my Office published a handbook on human rights compliance for border security, screening and management. Together with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and under the Global Compact, the Office produced also a compendium of recommended practices for the responsible use and sharing of biometrics.

Similarly, last month the United Nations and the United States launched the GCTF Watchlisting Initiative to assist the implementation of UNSCR 2396 (2017) and the associated Global Counter-Terrorism Forum “*New York Memorandum on Good Practices for Interdicting Terrorist Travel*”.

Fourth - Bringing Terrorists to Justice

Our discussions highlighted the complex challenges faced by Member States to bring ISIL members and their affiliates, including returning foreign terrorist fighters to justice.

Participants underlined the evidentiary and jurisdictional challenges Member States are facing to prosecute returnees. While the collection, handling, sharing and use of so-called “battlefield evidence” is increasingly relevant in such cases, these tasks should be performed carefully and conducted in full compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, where applicable.

CTED recently also published Guidelines to prosecute terrorist offences.

UNCCT and INTERPOL have published a handbook on Using the Internet and Social Media for Counter-Terrorism Investigations. CTED and UNODC are supporting national practitioners on the use of a Practical Guide for Requesting Electronic Evidence Across Borders.

Security Council resolution 2396 (2017) calls upon States to adopt comprehensive prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies.

My Office, together with CTED and UNODC has started a new global programme on Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration in furtherance of the Madrid Guiding Principles.

Fifth - Addressing terrorist radicalisation and recruitment

Participants underscored the need to address the risks of terrorist radicalization and recruitment in prisons and to reduce the risk of recidivism of former foreign terrorist fighters through measures to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society.

Participants highlighted the need for more evidence of what constitutes good practices in safely managing detainees convicted for terrorism offences or considered “at risk” of radicalization to terrorism.

UNODC has published a handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons and is implementing a joint pilot project in this regard with UNCCT and CTED to provide tailored assistance to Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Uganda.

Sixth - Gender sensitive approach to the FTF Phenomenon

Participants acknowledged that women sometimes have a combination of roles related to terrorist acts, including as facilitators, supporters and perpetrators, but also as victims of violence and other human rights abuses. This calls for a gender-sensitive approach throughout the lifecycle of terrorist radicalization.

The UNODC Handbook on gender dimensions of criminal justice responses to terrorism provides important guidance.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact has embarked on the development of guidelines for gender-sensitive screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of women with links to UN listed terrorist groups.

In this regard, I would also like to acknowledge the growing research and body of evidence available to policy-makers, such as the report recently published by UNDP and the International Civil Society Action Network on “Invisible Women – the Gendered Dimension of Return, Rehabilitation and Reintegration from Violent Extremism”.

Seventh - Misuse of new technologies

The misuse of information and communication technologies for terrorism purposes was highlighted as a complex challenge requiring a sophisticated response combining precise criminalization and law enforcement, technological awareness and innovation as well as public-private partnerships.

Eight - Youth Engagement

The need to engage and partner with youth was emphasized in particular, including by pursuing innovative ideas, such as the use of video games and partnership with the entertainment industry.

My Office runs a range of global programmes in partnership with other United Nations entities with regard to youth engagement and preventing violent extremism, including communications strategies, and leveraging sports for prevention.

Ninth - Proactive engagement with civil society

The conference emphasized the need to engage proactively with civil society in the development and implementation of strategies to address the challenges associated with foreign terrorist fighters and their families.

I welcome the active engagement of 38 civil society organizations in the work of this Conference. Civil society actors are seen as credible and trusted members of their communities and are therefore particularly well-placed to engage with them.

My Office is not only proactively working with CSOs around these regional conferences but is also developing a CSO engagement strategy.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters is one of the most serious dimensions of the terrorist threat.

I urge Member States to continue working together, through the United Nations and other fora, not only to protect people on their own territory, but extend solidarity and assistance beyond their borders.

The outcomes and recommendations of this Conference will inform the second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States on “Building Social and Institutional Resilience to Terrorism” to be held in New York on 1-2 July.

During the counter-terrorism week, prior to the conference, we will also hold the first-ever Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism on 30 June. I invite you to actively contribute to the success of the victim’s congress.

I am thankful to you all for your participation in the Conference and for the richness of our discussions over the past two days.

I will be satisfied if our discussions and interactions here in Vienna will help make our responses to the threat of terrorism better and more effective.

Thank you.