



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

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

**Briefing to the Security Council on the 16th report of the Secretary-General on
the threat posed by Da'esh**

9 February 2023

Madam President,
Excellencies,

I thank the Security Council for the opportunity to brief you today.

As I present the sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security, and the United Nations counter-terrorism efforts in support of Member States, it is important that we remember the impact that this terrorist organization has on human lives, livelihoods and peace.

In September last year, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism organized in New York the first United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism. This high-level event began with a powerful call to action by 10 victims and survivors of terrorism from around the world who shared their heart-wrenching stories of pain and loss but also of resilience and steadfastness in the face of sheer brutality and evil.

They reminded us of the trauma and destruction that terrorism leaves long after an attack is over.

I regularly meet with victims of terrorism. Their stories have a profound impact on me. Because beyond the headlines and behind the numbers, there are numerous people and communities who were affected by heinous crimes of Da'esh and other terrorist groups and individuals.

Engaging and addressing the plight of victims and survivors provides us with a compelling reason to support and strengthen our collective efforts to confront and defeat terrorism.

It also serves as an impetus to keep strengthening multilateral and interagency networks, including at the United Nations through the Secretary-General's Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

Madam President,
Excellencies,

I am pleased to be joined today by Mr. Weixiong Chen, Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, to present this report, which our offices prepared jointly with the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team.

I would like to thank Mr. Justin Hustwitt, Coordinator of the Monitoring Team, for his contribution in the preparation of the report, his first in this new role. And I look forward to building on our common efforts throughout his term.

Allow me to highlight a few key takeaways from the report, against the background of trends observed in the last two years.

The report asserts that, despite leadership losses and expenses that are diminishing its cash reserves, the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security remains high and has increased in and around conflict zones where the group and its affiliates are active.

The expansion of Da'esh and its affiliates is particularly worrying in Central and Southern Africa, as well as in the Sahel. The Secretary-General's reports have dutifully recorded this unfortunate trend, which should prompt us all to rethink and revise our efforts to counter the group, especially those that rely disproportionately on the use of force.

Previous reports raised concerns over an increased risk of attacks in non-conflict areas by unaffiliated lone actors and small cells inspired by Da'esh as pandemic-related restrictions eased. While this has not materialized over this reporting period, the level of terrorist activity continues to be a concern to Member States.

For example, Da'esh continues to use the Internet and social media, video games and gaming adjacent platforms to extend the reach of its propaganda to radicalize and recruit new supporters. Da'esh's use of new and emerging technologies also remains a key concern. The group continues to use unmanned aerial systems for surveillance and reconnaissance, as well as virtual assets to fundraise.

Despite repeated calls by the Secretary-General for urgent action, the dire situation in camps and detention facilities in the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic persists. The humanitarian, human rights, legal and security risks associated with the status quo have potentially far-reaching consequences in the mid-to-long-term. The pace of repatriations remains too slow, and children continue to bear the brunt of this catastrophe.

At the same time, the challenge of foreign terrorist fighters and their family members are not restricted to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

It is a global challenge. Not only do foreign terrorist fighters move between different theatres of conflict, but also the list of issues for when they return extends from accountability and prosecution

for suspected crimes to managing associated family members, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration.

Foreign terrorist fighters with battlefield experience relocating to their homes or to third countries further compounds the threat. As noted in the report, terrorist attacks committed by such individuals have proven to be particularly lethal compared to those committed by purely homegrown terrorists.

There are also instances of some radicalized women associated with Da'esh who reinvent themselves as recruiters, indoctrinating others and in particular children.

Excellencies,

Looking ahead, the report offers three key observations for this Council's consideration.

First, the high level of the threat posed by Da'esh and its affiliates, including their sustained expansion in parts of Africa, underscores the need for multidimensional approaches beyond security-centered responses. More complementarity is needed between security responses and preventive measures.

The framework for ensuring such complementarity is offered by relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy which is this year under the 8th review.

The United Nations will continue to work with Member States to ensure their effective, integrated and balanced implementation.

Second, such multidimensional approaches must be gender-sensitive and firmly anchored in international law, including international human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as reflective of a broad range of views from various segments in societies affected by terrorism.

No counter-terrorism measures can be successful in the end if they fail to uphold the rule of law and respect international law. In line with the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, human rights must be at the centre of United Nations system's efforts to counter and prevent terrorism.

Third, as the report points to an increased threat from terrorism in conflict zones, further efforts are necessary to address and prevent these conflicts in the first place. While terrorists exploit conflict dynamics, peace efforts are too often undermined and further complicated by terrorism. Better understanding the complex relationship between conflict and terrorism is a necessary step for devising more effective responses to these recurring challenges.

Referring to the New Agenda for Peace in his briefing to the General Assembly earlier this week, the Secretary-General said it must recognize the need for a new generation of peace enforcement missions and counter-terrorist operations. The New Agenda will also outline possible actions for ensuring more effective responses to terrorism across the United Nations system.

The Abuja Summit being organized by the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism and the Government of Nigeria later this year will offer another opportunity for exploring options in light of the deteriorating situation in parts of Africa, where terrorist fighters, funds, and weapons are increasingly moving between regions, demanding a transcontinental approach.

Excellencies,

The threat posed by Da'esh is a symptom of the convergence of risks and threats outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on Our Common Agenda. Countering this threat will continue to require our multilateral, collective and decisive efforts.

Thank You.