

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

2021 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week

**Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of
Member States**

**“Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies: Addressing
the Challenges of the New Decade”**

**Session I: “The global scourge of terrorism: assessment of current threats and emerging
trends for the new decade”**

Monday, 28 June 2021, 10.30 a.m.–1.00 p.m. EDT

**Opening remarks of the Chair,
Assistant Secretary General Michèle Coninsx
Executive Director, CTED**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I am delighted to chair the first session of the Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, which will focus on “The global scourge of terrorism: an assessment of current threats and emerging trends for the new decade”.

Pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (or “CTED”), the organization that I lead, is mandated to analyze emerging terrorist issues, trends and developments.

We do so through our dialogue with Member States, first and foremost, but also through our engagement with international, regional and subregional organizations; the private sector; civil society; and the research community.

Of course, the most significant global challenge facing us all has been the COVID-19 pandemic. CTED has been at the forefront of efforts to monitor and evaluate the impacts of the pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and CVE, publishing three analytical reports in the past 12 months, with the latest published only a week ago.

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CTED's analysis indicates that there is currently limited evidence of a clear correlation between the pandemic and a significant evolution in terrorist violence.

However, in many regions, the pandemic is likely to have increased the underlying drivers and structural factors that are often conducive to terrorism.

It is also likely to have exacerbated many of the trends and challenges we faced prior to the pandemic.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

As we look ahead to a post-pandemic world, it is likely that the dramatic shift from the physical to the virtual world will become permanent in many areas of our lives.

The Internet has also been a central focus of many terrorists and violent extremists over the past 18 months.

Online platforms have been used to spread conspiracy theories, propaganda, and to recruit and radicalize to violence.

Other technologies are also potentially open to terrorist abuse.

In its 2019 Trends Alert, CTED outlined the growing accessibility of drones and the potential for terrorists to use them for attacks, disruption, surveillance or propaganda.

Terrorists have also been increasingly raising and moving funds using cryptocurrencies and other blockchain-based technologies.

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And as we tragically saw in the 2019 Halle terrorist attack, terrorists have also explored the use of 3D-printed weapons, further complicating Member States' efforts to deny terrorists access to small arms and light weapons.

That attack further highlighted another trend of concern: the increasingly transnational threat of extreme right-wing (or racially or ethnically motivated) terrorism.

CTED has again been at the forefront of efforts to understand the challenges posed by this threat, both through its analysis and within the framework of last year's open meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on that topic.

We are also concerned by the rising threat posed by ISIL affiliates across Africa, including in the Sahel, West Africa and, most recently, in East and Southern Africa.

It is vital that the international community respond to this urgent challenge, prioritizing international and regional cooperation and a human rights-compliant and gender-and age-sensitive approach.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I am sure that, in our discussions today, we shall hear more about these key regional and thematic challenges and about their relationship with technology.

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In this regard, I am honoured to introduce today's panelists:

Mr. Jürgen Stock, Secretary-General of INTERPOL;

- Mr. Igor Sirotkin, Deputy Director of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation;
- Ms. Abby Johnson, Acting Executive Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, United States of America;
- Major-General Mohammed Babagana Monguno, National Security Advisor of Nigeria; and
- Mr. Edmund Fitton-Brown, Coordinator of the ISIL (Da'esh)/Al-Qaida Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, United Nations.

We will then hear a global outlook from Mr. Atle K. Midttun, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, before opening the floor for questions and observations.

Thank you.