

HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT TO VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

7-8 June 2022

Palazzo Montecitorio - Nuova Aula dei Gruppi Parlamentari
Via di Campo Marzio, 78, Rome, Italy

(In-person with limited online access)

I. BACKGROUND

Terrorism and violent extremism remain an increasing global threat, which cannot be addressed effectively by military operations and security measures alone; they require a collaborative and multi-dimensional approach amongst the entire international community.

Over the past few years, the international community has made real progress in upholding the rights and supporting the needs of victims of terrorism through the adoption of key UN General Assembly resolutions, by providing victims with a greater platform to share their experiences, as well as by placing victims at the forefront of United Nations counter-terrorism efforts.

Victims of terrorist acts frequently suffer severe, multiple and life-altering injuries and trauma, akin to harm suffered by victims of grave human rights violations and international crimes. In addition to other forms of reparation, compensation for harm suffered, rehabilitation, and provision of adequate services can play an important role in enabling victims to move on with their lives.

The UN Secretary-General's report on victims (A/74/790), the 2019 UN General Assembly resolution 73/305, and the seventh review resolution of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted in June 2021, have all continued to urge Member States and United Nations entities to strengthen their efforts to support victims. This support has ranged from advocacy and solidarity to more practical measures, such as capacity building and technical assistance.

In his report on “Progress made by the United Nations system in supporting Member States in assisting victims of terrorism” (A/74/790) of 8 April 2020, the UN Secretary-General suggests that “Member States may also wish to consider developing national legislation that specifically addresses the rights, interests and needs of victims of terrorism”. The Secretary-General's report states that the “gap between Member States' commitments to victims of terrorism and the effective implementation of such commitments at the national level needs to be narrowed”. The report

therefore suggests that “Member States may wish to seek out model legislation, good practices and lessons learned from those jurisdictions that have effectively implemented practices and legislation that benefit victims of terrorism”. It adds that the “United Nations continues to stand ready to support Member States in this regard, including through the development of model legislation.” (A/74/790, para. 58).

As part of their collaboration aimed to strengthen the capacity of national parliaments to play their role in counter-terrorism and prevention of violent extremism, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism/UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNOCT/UNCCT), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), identified the development of the “Model Legislative Provisions (MLPs) to support and protect the rights and needs of Victims of Terrorism (VoT)”, as a priority. The parliamentary tool, jointly developed by UNOCT/UNCCT, UNODC, and IPU, was officially launched virtually on 4 February 2022.

The purpose of developing model legislative provisions was two-fold. First, they will serve as a model for the review of existing laws and procedures related to victims of terrorism, in line with recent advances on this subject matter, and to support the development of legislation where no legislation exists. Secondly, the provisions can systematize and promote the exchange of information regarding existing good practices. Additionally, the development of model legislative provisions can serve to draw attention to the urgency of taking concrete steps to protect, assist and support victims of terrorism.

The model legislative provisions are not intended to replace national legislative drafting processes nor to be incorporated directly into national legislation. They propose a basis to assist in strengthening the national response and tailoring it to the national needs of each Member State, in line with their constitutional principles and legal tradition, and after a careful review of its existing legislative framework.

In June 2021, in recognition of the critical role played by national and regional parliaments in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization, the UNOCT Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement was established in Doha, with the generous support of the Shura Council of Qatar.

II. MAIN OBJECTIVES

The high-level conference will allow parliamentarians to identify lasting solutions and make a parliamentary contribution to global efforts in counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, with robust action and a real impact on communities that have fallen victims to terrorist acts. In order to guide these efforts, the conference will also serve as an opportunity to

introduce the model legislative provisions to parliamentarians who will be key in ensuring that parliaments include them in their national legislations.

This high-level conference will bring together various stakeholders, including parliamentarians, representatives of UN entities, leading experts, members of regional parliamentary assemblies, victims of terrorism, victims' associations, and civil society organizations, with the objective of identifying the best way for parliamentarians to address the rights and needs of victims of terrorism and to find tangible legislative measures that can be implemented to enact positive change and creates lasting impact on the national level as well as within their communities.

The high-level conference will commence with the opening remarks and keynote addresses and a presentation of the model legislative provisions by the co-authors. Following this, there will be a total of four sessions. During the first session, panelists will discuss the role of parliamentarians in ensuring a tailored response to address large scale displacement and violations of rights to livelihood, shelter, education, healthcare, and liberty. The following session will focus on the role of civil society groups and organizations in complementing state and parliamentary efforts in supporting victims of terrorism and ensuring access to justice. Session three will be on incorporating protection and national support, including material and social needs, for victims of terrorism in state counter-terrorism strategies and legislation. In session four, panelists will share good practices and lessons learned on support to victims of terrorism on the local and national levels and the importance of systematizing and promoting the exchange of information regarding existing good practices. Finally, the high-level Conference will close with closing remarks.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

The high-level conference is organized by the UNOCT Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement, in cooperation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA), the African Parliamentary Union (APU), and the Shura Council of the State of Qatar. The event, kindly hosted by the Parliament of Italy, will take place at the “Palazzo Montecitorio – Nuova Aula dei Gruppi Parlamentari” on 7-8 June 2022, in Rome, Italy. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in Arabic, English, and French. For further information, please see the provisional agenda and the logistics note.

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