

Statement at the 75th General Assembly Sixth Committee
Agenda Item Number 114: Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism
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Thank you, Chair.

The United States reiterates its firm condemnation of terrorism in all forms and manifestations. All acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of motivation.

The U.S. National Strategy for Counterterrorism (NSCT) recognizes today's terrorist landscape is more fluid and complex than ever and highlights the need for our partners to play a paramount role in the future of counterterrorism. We appreciate the United Nations' critical role in mobilizing the international community and building capacity for Member States to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS), relevant Security Council resolutions, and the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The four pillars of the GCTS – including addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and upholding human rights and the rule of law – remain as relevant today as when the Strategy was adopted. The United States hopes that next year's resolution reviewing the Strategy will provide Member States with useful guidance, while rectifying flaws in past resolutions.

The Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolutions 2178 in 2014 and 2396 in 2017 and the following 2018 Addendum to the 2015 Madrid Guiding Principles remain cornerstones of the global counterterrorism framework and an effective response to detect and counter terrorist travel. We applaud ICAO's recent adoption of Passenger Name Record (PNR) Standards and Recommended Practices, as called for in resolution 2396. Additionally, resolution 2462, adopted in 2019, was a major addition to the global framework for countering the financing of terrorism, regardless of whether financing is tied to a specific terrorist act.

Sadly, in August the Security Council fell short of its responsibilities, by not including repatriation in a draft resolution addressing the prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of terrorists, including foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their accompanying family members. Adoption of such a resolution would have been worse than no resolution. The need for repatriation, the use of battlefield evidence in support of law enforcement actions and prosecutions, and appropriate sentencing for terrorism-related crimes will continue to be priority issues for the United States in the Security Council and other multilateral forums. With thousands of FTFs remaining in custody in Syria and Iraq, and thousands more family members languishing in camps for the displaced, a concerted international effort that includes repatriation is essential not only for humanitarian reasons, but also to prevent the terrorist radicalization of another generation.

While we and our partners have destroyed ISIS's territorial so-called "caliphate," we cannot let our guard down against the ongoing threat of ISIS's global branches and networks. We remain

committed to bringing the resources and expertise of the Global Defeat-ISIS Coalition to bear on this next stage of the fight.

Member States' adoption of the "whole-of-government" approach to countering terrorism continues to be an important aspect of the Security Council's work. Several resolutions underscore the importance of having all elements of government work together to prevent and counter terrorism and terrorist radicalization and recruitment. Equally important is a "whole-of-society" approach. The UN should partner with local communities, including local governments, and key civil society organizations, which are among the most effective stakeholders in countering terrorist narratives.

We express our support for the UN's counterterrorism efforts, as well as those of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, or GCTF, its inspired institutions, and other multilateral bodies, civil society, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, and regional and sub-regional organizations, that work to develop practical tools to implement the UN counterterrorism framework. A prime example of this is the United States and UN co-led Watchlisting Initiative in the GCTF. We call for continued coordination among UN entities and with external partners, including the GCTF, the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, the Global Community Engagement & Resilience Fund, and Hedayah.

The United States recognizes the progress being made within the UN Office of Counterterrorism to strengthen coordination efforts through its Global Compact. We have supported the development of UNOCT's Global Repatriation, Prosecution, Reintegration, and Rehabilitation Initiative, the Global Programme to Counter Terrorist Travel, and the Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and the Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism; the latter of which produced practical operating procedures, mechanisms, and best practices to protect vulnerable targets at major sporting events. The United States supports UNOCT efforts in making UN counterterrorism programming more efficient and effective, avoiding duplication, and assisting in implementation of the GCTS across all four of its pillars. Close coordination with the UN Counterterrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) is essential to ensure UNOCT's activities draw from the lessons and trends identified from CTED country assessments. Member States also need to be responsive and open to CTED's requests for visits.

We emphasize that efforts to counter terrorism that come at the expense of human rights and the rule of law are counterproductive. The work of CTED and UNOCT must recognize the importance of countering terrorism while respecting human rights and the rule of law. In this regard, we cannot avoid mentioning Xinjiang. The United States strongly objects to China's mass detention of Muslim Uyghurs and members of other minorities, repressive surveillance, and use of coercive population control like forced sterilization and abortion. Governments must not use counterterrorism as a pretext for stifling freedom of religion or belief and other human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Domestically and internationally, we continue to engage and raise community awareness of terrorism or terrorist radicalization, as well as terrorist tactics and recruitment dynamics. We also

provide community leaders tools and resources to work on counterterrorism efforts. One continuing area of work is state and local intervention services for individuals headed on a path toward terrorism before a crime is committed.

We emphasize the importance of countering the use of the internet for terrorist purposes, while respecting human rights such as freedom of expression. The internet is but one tool used by terrorists, and technology is not the problem – terrorists are the problem. We continue to strengthen and expand our voluntary collaboration and partnerships with private technology companies to counter terrorism online, including by enforcing terms of service. Member States need to seek to build long-term resilience to terrorist messages through partnerships with youth to cultivate critical thinking skills and online public safety awareness through education. Positive narratives to counter terrorist propaganda are an important element of these efforts.

To help achieve this long-term and comprehensive vision, we need all Member States to better assist and sufficiently resource UN system actors and other relevant implementers in order to deliver needed technical assistance and generate more effective solutions. The United States continues to contribute significant funding to the UN and other entities, for research, capacity-building assistance, and training. We have made substantial investments in the capabilities of our partners on the front lines. The United States has proven to be an indispensable counterterrorism partner, but we want partners to be self-sufficient in defending themselves against ISIS, al-Qa'ida, Iran-backed terrorists, racially or ethnically motivated terrorists, and any other terrorist threats they face.

Turning to treaty developments, we again recognize the great success of the United Nations, thanks in large part to the work of this Committee, in developing 18 universal instruments that establish a thorough legal framework for countering terrorism. These instruments are only effective, however, if they are widely ratified and implemented. We are pleased to report that earlier this year President Trump transmitted to the U.S. Senate for its advice and consent both the 2010 Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Relating to International Civil Aviation and the 2010 Protocol Supplementary to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft. As we have emphasized since its negotiation in 2014, the United States does not consider the 2014 Montreal Protocol to the Tokyo Convention to be one of these universal instruments, and does not intend to become party to it, in light of serious deficiencies counter-productive to law enforcement efforts.

Concerning a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, we will listen carefully to delegates' statements. However, it is critical that the United Nations send united, unambiguous signals when it comes to terrorism, otherwise we risk some of the progress that we have made.

Before concluding, no discussion of international terrorism can ignore Iran, the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism, and its numerous terrorist proxies and partners, including Hizballah. The United States commends those countries that have taken far-reaching action through counterterrorism designations and sanctions against Iran and its proxies and partners, including by taking action against Hizballah as a whole, rejecting the false distinction between its so-called

“political” and “military” wings. We encourage others to do the same, and hope the UN will play a constructive role in efforts against Iran’s support for terrorism.

Thank you, Chair.