Open Briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on "Denying Save Haven to Those who Finance, Plan, Support, or Commit Terrorist Acts, or Provide Safe Havens, and Preventing Terrorists from Abusing the Asylum System, in Conformity with International Law"

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Mr Chairman, His Excellency, Ambassador Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Resolution 1373 for conveying this Open Briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on the important issue of "Denying save haven to those who finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts, or provide safe havens, and preventing terrorists from abusing the asylum system, in conformity with international law".

It is a great pleasure and honor to be part of this first session, next to such distinguished panelists.

It is an evidence that the global terrorism threat facing the international community today has grown in complexity. The growing number of conflict zones around the globe provides transnational terrorist organizations with multiple fronts on which they operate simultaneously. This **violent extremism** is further compounded with rising unpredictable attacks by independent terrorist cells and lone wolves, striking from within their own societies, across all regions.

The global cross-border movement of foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) and sophisticated funding model of today's terrorist organizations enables them to reach out to a wider sphere of recruits, as well as vast range of both conventional and non-conventional weapons and materials required for scaling up attacks against civilians and critical infrastructure. Furthermore, the current generation of terrorists is technologically savvy and active on social media, and violent literature and propaganda are widely available and accessible.

The complex combination of shifts in travel patterns, fraudulent travel documents, and communication and social media manipulation have led to a 'decisive stage' in the fight against terrorism, which demand a comprehensive, coordinated and consistent response.

Against this backdrop, INTERPOL is increasingly perceived as an important international partner in the fight against terrorism by national law enforcement authorities, and regional and global partners around the world.

In response, during its 85th Session, held in Bali, Indonesia, November of last year, INTERPOL General Assembly adopted the **INTERPOL Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**.

The Strategy represents a five-year (2016-2020) flexible strategic framework that shapes INTERPOL's ongoing and projected counter-terrorism efforts and global actions.

The Strategy defines INTERPOL's **counter-terrorism mandate** by "Assisting and creating opportunities for law enforcement in its member countries in preventing and disrupting terrorist activities through the identification of members of terrorist networks and their affiliates, by tackling the main factors enabling their activities: Travel and Mobility, Online Presence, Weapons and Materials, and Finances."

This is conceived in full accordance with INTERPOL's Mandate and Constitution, and in reference to its comprehensive counter-terrorism legal framework reflected in many General Assembly Resolutions over the last decades.

The Strategy defines **five action streams** where INTERPOL will assist its 190 member countries:

1. Identification: Detecting and positively identifying members of known transnational terrorist groups and their facilitators.
2. Travel and mobility: Enhancing national and regional border security and reducing cross-border movement of terrorists and their affiliates, and identifying and disrupting networks that facilitate their travel.
3. Online presence: Preventing and countering the exploitation of cyberspace for terrorist purposes, by enhancing identification and detection efforts.
4. Weapons and materials: Identifying, tracking and intercepting the illicit trafficking of weapons and materials necessary for terrorist activities.
5. Finances: Tracing and disruption of financial streams funding terrorist activity and facilitation.

The Strategy deploys and further develops selected **INTERPOL Policing Capabilities**, such as: Police Data Management, Intelligence Analysis, Forensic Support, Border Security, and Capacity Building and training - to be applied to the five counter-terrorism Action Streams.

I would like to expand on the first and second Action Streams - "Identification" and "Travel and Mobility" - considering their obvious and major relevance to this Panel's theme:

- **The key objectives of the "Identification" Action Stream could be summarized in the following:**

  1- **Maintain international data flow on known entities between law enforcement agencies:** INTERPOL envisions acting as the primary global, neutral platform for information sharing among national law enforcement on known terrorist affiliates, including FTFs bound for or returning from active conflict zones. Thanks to information shared by over 60 member countries, today INTERPOL's FTF Database holds almost 14500 profiles based on colored Notices and Diffusions combined.

  2- **Promote systematic inclusion of biometrics linked to terrorist profiles in INTERPOL datasets and alerts:** Information sharing alone remains only one facet of effective cross-border policing. The key in tactical effectiveness rests on matching available terrorist profiles to potential suspects in the field in a timely and effective manner. The proliferation of aliases and the growing complexity in the abuse of travel and identity documents make nominal information and basic identifiers alone insufficient to attain this goal.

     This is why INTERPOL needs and encourages the collection of biometric information - focused on unique identifiable attributes for identification such as fingerprints - as an integral part of terrorist profiles shared though its global platform, and as a key component of the information included in terrorism-related Notices and Diffusions requested by member countries. Needless to emphasize the fact that the availability of biometric information across international policing channels can deliver its maximum impact only where capacity (technology and skillsets) exists at the frontline to exploit it.

     In 2014, the successful identification and interception of an FTF who was travelling on a migrants route with no travel document of identity card

was accomplished thanks to the matching of his fingerprints and photo against a Red Notice that contained complete biometrics information.

Consequently, in 2016, the 85th session of INTERPOL General Assembly adopted Resolution AG-2016-RES-04 in order to enhance biometric information sharing to counter terrorist mobility.

3- **Enhance data flow from military forces deployed in counter-terrorism operations via police channels:** As the focal point and primary destination of FTFs, conflict theaters hold invaluable information to corroborate law enforcement criminal data and disrupt mobility of returnees.

Military forces deployed to these areas or those engaged in post-conflict efforts can collect information of evidential value to law enforcement (e.g. biometrics from attack sites, travel documents, and digital evidence). Bridging this gap has proven invaluable in facilitating successful investigations into recruitment and facilitation networks

- **As for the "Travel and Mobility" Action Stream:**

1- **Ensure systematic and rapid population of SLTD database:** FTF travel tactics and procedures have shown an increasingly elaborate use of a combination of valid and fraudulent travel documents to avoid detection. Stolen and lost documents, and particularly "stolen blanks", remain a key asset for terrorist mobility, as shown by recent attacks by returnees.

The key role of INTERPOL's SLTD database and its over 70 million records in this context is clear. INTERPOL encourages its member countries to ensure systematic SLTD population and rapid/automated update to ensure that high quality, comprehensive data is available for member countries to check at key locations.

2- **Identify high-value chokepoints, patterns and routes via strategic analysis:** INTERPOL's role as a single, global information-sharing platform underscores its unique capacity to develop a truly cross-regional strategic intelligence picture on the FTF phenomenon. As part of its analytical support package, INTERPOL will thus monitor, identify and analyze terrorist Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), with a particular focus on patterns in travel routes and hubs, and deception techniques used in terrorist mobility. Findings are being shared with member countries on a regular basis and in full compliance with the Rules for the Processing of Data (RPDs) and Data Confidentiality Rules.

3- **Identify facilitators/smuggling rings through operational analysis:** As part of its criminal analysis efforts, INTERPOL gives specific focus to the recruitment and facilitation networks that support FTF travel in order to support investigations.

Cross-checks of available data will include the identification of linkages with organizations of non-terrorist nature yet potentially serving terrorist groups as travel suppliers/facilitators. Criminal synergies with organized smuggling networks – where applicable – will also be assessed through cross-criminal business analysis.

Mr Chairman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion,

The current threat landscape has brought recognition from the international community of the important role for INTERPOL in the global fight against terrorism. In parallel, the application of a regionally tailored approach in implementing capacity-building initiatives and providing effective investigative support requires a greater level of proximity and sustainable on-ground presence of INTERPOL in regions prone to terrorist activity.

The implementation of the INTERPOL Global Counter-terrorism Strategy and its action streams will be accomplished through a hybrid, region-focused decentralization model allowing the Organization, subject to the availability of necessary resources, to provide the required support to its member countries in the most concrete and regionally tailored fashion.

This implies close coordination with regional bodies and their respective law enforcement arms in order to avoid duplication and maximize resources, while partnerships with international organizations such as the United Nations' relevant bodies such as CTED and the CTITF are vital to avoid the fragmentation of the global security architecture.

Thank you,