

Concept Note

**Second open meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee
with its Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network partners**

“Recent trends in terrorism and counter-terrorism”

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 16 November 2017

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 2129 (2013), the Security Council directs the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to identify emerging issues, trends and developments relating to Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and to advise the Committee on practical ways in which Member States can implement the resolutions. In the resolution’s paragraph 19, the Council invites CTED , as appropriate and in consultation with relevant Member States, to further engage and enhance its partnerships with international, regional and sub-regional organizations, civil society, academia and other entities in conducting research and information-gathering, and identifying good practices, and in that context to support the CTC’s efforts to promote the implementation of resolutions [1373 \(2001\)](#) and [1624 \(2005\)](#), and *underscores* the importance of engaging with development entities.

2. CTED gathers primary information on new counter-terrorism-related trends and developments through: (i) country assessments; (ii) ongoing dialogue with Member States; (iii) cooperation with the Analytical and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. Additional sources of information come from (i) cooperation with international and regional organisations (including through participation in workshops, conferences and seminars); (ii) engagement with members of the Research Network and other academic and research institutes; (iii) engagement with civil society (including academia); (iv) engagement with data collection and analysis providers; and (v) engagement with the private sector.

3. In an effort to enhance its analytical capacity and its engagement with the research community, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) launched the Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 19 February 2015. The Network currently consists of over 90 leading think tanks and research institutions from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and Oceania. Engagement through the Network enables CTED to enhance its analytical capacity, and to cooperate closely with the global research community and research units of international, regional and sub-regional organizations, with the aim of supporting the Counter-Terrorism Committee’s efforts to promote Member States’ implementation of the relevant Council resolutions. It also supports the Committee and CTED to keep abreast of emerging terrorist trends and developments and identify current challenges, as well as effective approaches to addressing them.

II. Objective

4. The second open meeting will support the Committee, CTED and the research community to analyse and discuss emerging issues, trends and developments, relating to resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014) and subsequent relevant resolutions of the Council. In preparation for the open meeting, CTED has consulted with members of its Research Network in order to identify select priority areas of focus. On the basis of those consultations; the findings of its country assessments; its ongoing dialogue with Member States; and its cooperation with the Analytical and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector, and third-party intelligence sources, CTED proposes that the discussions focus on the following topics:

- i. Implementation of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), in the context of the challenge of returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters;
- ii. National practices on countering violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism; and
- iii. The protection of civilian (“soft”) targets.¹

5. As indicated in a number of UN Reports, while the flow of FTF to Iraq and Syria has slowed, returnees and the relocation of fighters from the conflict zones to other regions present a considerable threat to international security. The flow of returnees risks spreading the threat posed by individuals loyal to ISIL to new regions.²

6. Over recent years, the proportion of terrorist plots resulting in fatalities has increased, in part due to the activities of returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), as well as due to the evolution in terrorists’ modus operandi, including: (i) their use of basic (legal and easily accessible) tools that reduce opportunities for detection and disruption; (ii) their emphasis on (often poorly protected) civilian targets; and (iii) their use of information and communications technologies (ICT), including encrypted messaging services, for terrorist purposes, including to remotely guide single-perpetrator terrorist attacks. In addition to calling for terrorist attacks on an international scale, terrorist organizations - including ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab - have compensated for their territorial losses by expanding their presence to new areas. The links between terrorism and transnational organized crime have also exacerbated conflict; increased the opportunities for the smuggling/trafficking of weapons, illicit goods and human beings; and expanded opportunities for terrorism financing. Terrorist organizations have also continued to recruit, operationalize and victimize women and children.

7. The risk of possible links between those returnees and local violent extremists is also of particular concern. Some Member States are concerned that the numbers of FTFs returning to their countries of origin, potentially intending to perpetrate attacks, in combination with those being radicalized to violence within those countries, present a growing challenge to national security.³ For example, while terrorist groups in South-East Asia are believed to be ideologically divided on ISIL, its propaganda messaging and the so-called “caliphate” have

¹ Regular concentration of ISIL attacks on soft targets was indicated as one of the regional trends in the twentieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to resolution 1526 (2004) (S/2017/573, para 7, 43, 58).

² S/2017/97 (para 4).

³ S/2016/629 (para. 4).

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

resonated with violent extremists in the region, especially with the younger generation.⁴ This tendency is also true with regard to Europe, where an increase in radicalization to violence and violent extremism linked to ISIL networks has been reported.⁵ The latest report of the Monitoring Team⁶ also highlighted the focus of ISIL on civilian (“soft”) targets and the need to protect them, as an emerging regional trend.

8. These and related issues will be discussed at a preparatory round-table workshop for Network partners, jointly organized by New York University and CTED in New York on 15 November 2017. CTED will deliver a summary of those discussions during the open meeting.

III. Format of discussions

9. The proposed open meeting will include a panel of experts representing Network partners. It will consist of an opening session; presentation of CTED work on the identification of trends; three thematic sessions, focusing on the topics above; an interactive discussion; and a closing session. The discussions will be moderated by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Chair. Participating think tanks and institutions will be encouraged to raise issues and questions during the question-and-answer sessions.

IV. Venue and date

10. The open meeting will be held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 16 November 2017, in Conference Room 4, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

V. Participants

11. The participants will include researchers from leading think tanks and academic institutions working in areas of relevance to the selected topics. CTED will identify participants representing a range of perspectives with a view to generating informed discussion of the selected topics, with reference to all affected regions, as well as to men, women and youth.

VI. Expected outcomes

12. CTED will prepare:

- i. A list of specific trends, developments and issues that require further research and analysis; and
- ii. Develop an internal work plan for future engagement with members of the Network, with a view to developing evidence-based research that can support the work of the Committee and CTED.

13. CTED, subject to prior consultations with the Committee, will prepare and submit to the Committee a report on the outcomes of the meeting.

⁴ S/2017/573 (para 58).

⁵ S/2017/573 (para 10).

⁶ S/2017/573 (paras 7, 43, 58).