

**Security Council meeting on the seventh report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat**

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Statement by

**Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninx,  
Executive Director, CTED**

*Mister President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on the seventh report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL and United Nations efforts in support of Member States to counter the threat.

I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov for providing an overview of the report, and to thank his team for their collaboration in preparing the report, on the basis of input from CTED and the Analytical and Sanctions Monitoring Team.

As we have already heard, we can be in no doubt that the threat from ISIL continues to evolve and to pose significant challenges to all actors involved in countering it.

These challenges derive in particular from:

- (i) the ongoing transformation of ISIL into a covert network;
- (ii) the activities of its regional affiliates throughout the world; and
- (iii) the potential threat posed by returning and relocating FTFs.

*Mister President,*

Some eight months have passed since the Council's adoption of resolution 2396, on the issue of returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters.

In my briefing today, I wish to highlight three key challenges associated with this threat.

Since the adoption of the first FTF resolution – resolution 2178 (2014), which focused on preventing FTF travel to the conflict zones – the emphasis has shifted to FTFs who relocate or who return to their countries of origin, nationality or to third countries.

In CTED's engagement with Member States, we have identified the following trends in this regard:

*First*, even though the number of returning and relocating FTFs is thus far not as high as some had feared, their unique situation nonetheless poses a range of challenges to Member States.

Member States have experienced difficulties in conducting comprehensive risk assessments of those who return and their accompanying family members, as requested by resolution 2396.

The prosecution of returning and relocating FTFs also faces various evidentiary and jurisdictional challenges.

In some cases, a revision of the existing legal framework is required.

Prosecutors and investigators require specialized knowledge, including in the use of special investigative techniques that rely on modern technologies.

They must often rely on evidence gathered by the military or on digital evidence located on foreign servers.

Strengthening judicial cooperation and mutual legal assistance therefore remains vital.

States must also develop tailored prosecution strategies for returning and relocating men, women and children.

Even though Member States have developed a range of rehabilitation and reintegration strategies and programmes, there is limited knowledge as to their effectiveness.

A second trend is that a significant number of FTFs have already entered States' criminal-justice systems.

This is placing new demands on prisons and raising increasing concerns about the potential for in-prison radicalization.

More work is needed to address issues such as prison capacity and security; the conditions of, and treatment in, detention; the specific needs and risks associated with violent extremist prisoners; and the development of non-custodial alternatives.

*Mister President,*

I also want to draw your attention to a third trend identified by CTED in its engagement with Member States.

**This new trend concerns the potential risks posed by the forthcoming release of imprisoned FTFs.**

**States are increasingly concerned at the potential for some of these released FTFs to re-engage in terrorist activities and radicalization to violence.**

**Many States are uncertain as to the effectiveness of risk-assessment and monitoring tools developed for such individuals, whether during their imprisonment or following their release.**

**A number of FTFs have been given relatively short sentences, for different reasons, including in some cases due to lack of evidence of their involvement in terrorist activity in the conflict zones.**

**In such cases, Member States may have limited opportunity to engage at-risk individuals in rehabilitation and reintegration programmes prior to their release.**

**There is therefore a need to strengthen the collection of data and information-sharing in this area, including on lessons learned, in order to ensure that rehabilitation and reintegration programmes are based on sound methodologies and are implemented in full compliance with domestic law and international human rights law.**

**CTED will continue to support Member States in their efforts to identify relevant good practices in this area.**

*Mister President,*

**Foreign terrorist fighters are only one threat emanating from ISIL and its associates.**

The complex and evolving threat posed by terrorism requires us to remain ever vigilant.

In our country assessment visits on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, we continue to highlight the importance of effective implementation by Member States of the relevant Council resolutions, including resolutions 2178 and 2396.

Over the past six months, Member States and United Nations entities have continued to develop innovative ways to address the threat.

Allow me to highlight just a few.

We continue to support Member States in the use of the most up-to-date technologies to secure their borders.

Resolution 2396 introduced several new requirements in this regard, including the use of advance passenger information and passenger name records systems, as well as biometrics.

We shall continue to assist States to ensure that these technologies are used effectively and responsively, in full compliance with international law, including human rights law, and with due regard to privacy and data-protection concerns.

One important milestone in this regard was the recent publication of the *United Nations Compendium of Recommended Practices for the Responsible Use and Sharing of Biometrics in Counter Terrorism*.

Another was the recent publication, pursuant to resolution 2396, of the *Compendium on good practices on the protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks*.

**We also continue to forge new and innovative partnerships with the private sector, including in particular in the area of information and communications technologies.**

**We are cooperating not only with some of the big names in the industry, but also with small enterprises and start-ups.**

**This engagement is essential, for example, with respect to gathering digital evidence in terrorism cases.**

**CTED, UNODC and the International Association of Prosecutors are developing guidance to requesting and gathering electronic evidence across borders, including from private communications service providers, and will publish a practical guide for Member States in September.**

**The CTITF Legal and Criminal Justice Working Group is also finalizing UN guidelines to facilitate the use and admissibility of information and evidence preserved and shared by the military.**

**I wish to stress that our continued engagement with civil society, including women's groups, is essential to ensuring a holistic, whole-of-society approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism.**

**And our dialogue with the research community, particularly through CTED's Global Research Network, continues to provide new insights and feed into our analysis of the latest trends and developments.**

*Mister President,*

**The global fight against ISIL and its affiliates continues.**

**Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)**

**The UN system, including CTED and OCT, continues to strengthen its coordination and coherence to assess implementation gaps, identify good practices, and deliver the necessary technical assistance to Member States.**

**Our unity and our joint efforts are as vital, now, as ever before.**

*Thank you, Mister President.*

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