

## **Open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on “Preventing Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons”**

*United Nations Headquarters, New York, 17 May 2017*

### **Chair’s summary**

The Security Council has repeatedly stressed the importance of preventing terrorists from accessing weapons.

In its resolution 1373 (2001), the Council decides that States shall eliminate the supply of weapons to terrorists. In its resolution 2220 (2015), it “encourages the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), within their existing mandates and in close cooperation with all relevant United Nations counter-terrorism bodies, to focus on Member States’ capacities and needs to address the threats posed by accessibility of weapons used by terrorists as well as to counter the supply and trafficking of weapons to terrorists”.

The Council has also requested CTED to report to the Counter-Terrorism Committee on gaps in such capacities and to provide concrete plans to facilitate technical assistance for strengthening Member States’ capacities and to provide recommendations for actions to enhance response to such threats.

In its resolution 2195 (2014), the Council stresses the importance of addressing the link between cross-border crime, including trafficking of arms, and terrorism, and the role of CTED in assessing gaps and facilitating technical assistance.

In this regard, it is essential that the international community works together to promote cooperation among all stakeholders in identifying effective ways to eliminate the supply of weapons to terrorists; prevent the illicit trade in weapons, including online; and prevent weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists. And there is need to continue to identify the gaps in Member States’ capacities and find ways to address them.

The aims of the open briefing, conducted at the UN Headquarters on 17 May 2017, were to analyse and discuss present and emerging threats, trends and developments relating to preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons, in accordance with resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2195 (2014), 2220 (2015), 2322 (2016) and 2341 (2017) and to identify gaps in Member States’ efforts to implement measures to eliminate the supply of weapons to terrorists.

*Session I* focused on addressing the evolution of the threat posed by terrorists’ acquisition of weapons, as well as on ways to strengthen prevention efforts. It was noted that, in its efforts to assist States to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons, CTED had not only included this topic in its country assessment visits, but also participated in a number of related initiatives, including the development of the Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iARMS), together with INTERPOL; the development of the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS), within the Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) framework; and cooperation with international and regional organizations.

CTED had also strengthened its cooperation and dialogue with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and strengthened its efforts in the field of countering abuse of the Internet for terrorist purposes (including to sell and acquire weapons and their components).

It was noted that conventional arms remained the weapons of choice for terrorists. Illicit flows of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and explosive elements for manufacture of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) pose serious concerns. It was recalled that policy and legislative instruments and measures relating to disarmament and arms control existed at the national, regional and international levels, but that a number of challenges undermined their effectiveness.

At the national level, for example, laws were outdated and ill-adapted to address current security threats. There was a need to develop an arms-control culture that focused on terrorism. States lacked implementation capacities. A number of regional and international organizations had adopted arms control instruments, but their effectiveness was undermined by a number of problems, including slow implementation. The international community had adopted a number of arms-control measures especially through the United Nations. A number of those measures (such as the relevant Security Council resolutions) were specifically designed to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons. However, most such instruments did not explicitly mention “terrorism”.

States and other institutions had noted the lack of resources for implementing existing policies and measures, lack of modern technology and equipment for effective weapons control, and inadequate implementation mechanisms. States should adopt a whole-of-Government approach that brought together all departments and entities involved weapons control, as well as those engaged in peace and security and development. The Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on SALW would provide be an opportunity for all Member States to comprehensively address these issues.

The international community should clearly define the concept of improvised explosive device (IED), put in place appropriate training, raise awareness, and secure the components used to build IEDs. It was critical that the threat of IEDs be addressed holistically, including through a whole-of-UN approach.

*Session II* focused on the most significant gaps and challenges encountered in protecting military surplus, ensuring proper storage, and accountability, as well as on the growing use of IEDs and associated components. It was noted that some firearms used in recent terrorist attacks had originated in disused arsenals and others had been purchased online. Preventive, regulatory and security measures in place to control weapons and their movements were often inadequate. Some Member States had not introduced effective registries or systems for marking weapons or licensing their manufacture. Further challenges included lack of modern technology; difficulty in keeping pace with new weapons-trafficking methods; lack of specialized skills for the investigation of complex trafficking cases (including cases linked to terrorism); and weak, outdated legislative and institutional frameworks. There was a need to adopt an integrated approach to the management of conventional ammunition stockpiles. In that regard, it was noted that the Weapon and Ammunition Management (WAM) project had been successfully established in a number of States. Efforts had also been made to engage local communities in the collection of war remnants and train police officers to account for their weapons. However, international assistance at the ground level should be strengthened.

Steps should also be taken to process captured weapons appropriately prior to their disposal was noted.

*Session III* focused on new risks and trends deriving from international arms trafficking via the Internet and across borders, including the consequences of terrorist and criminal access to, and use of, deactivated and reactivated weapons acquired from collectors, including online. The participants highlighted the need to implement proper international arms control standards and to fully utilize existing tools and resources. It was noted that Dark Web markets were attractive to terrorists because they offered almost perfect anonymity. The Dark Web posed a range of new challenges, with respect in particular to investigation and prosecution. However, its impact could be minimized through the introduction of effective measures to limit the availability of illegal weapons and strengthen policing and investigative techniques. There was a need to implement existing international standards, including in the areas of export control, end-user verification, secure storage, preventing illegal cross-border movements of weapons, and tracing of weapons used by terrorists. The United Nations had followed the lead of Member States in developing voluntary international standards that provided practical guidance on implementing States' commitments within the framework of multilateral agreements such as the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms, the International Tracing Instrument, the UN Firearms Protocol, and the Arms Trade Treaty. Full implementation of those instruments was essential in preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons. States should make full use of the ISACS developed by the United Nations, as well as the tools and services provided by INTERPOL and the Global Firearms Package, including iARMS. It should be recalled that the seizure of weapons did not mark the end of an investigation, but rather the beginning of a new investigation into the origin of the weapon and its potential links to terrorism.

The Chair of the Committee, at the closing section, reiterated: (i) the importance of the Committee attached to further strengthening cooperation between the Committee, Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, and civil society actors with a view to addressing this threat, which is of great concern to all of us, not just to those directly affected; (ii) The Committee and CTED will continue to assess Member States' implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2195 (2014), 2220 (2015), 2322 (2016) and 2341 (2017) in relation to preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons; and (iii ) the Committee remains determined to support Member States in their efforts to prevent terrorist from acquiring weapons.

The Chair of the Committee, based on the discussions, closed the briefing with a number of recommendations as follows:

- In order to counter illicit trafficking of weapons and ammunitions, national systems for the collection and analysis of detailed data on illicit-weapons trafficking should be enhanced
- National legislation and controls on the possession, use and transfer of weapons should be strengthened
- Security Council arms embargoes must be respected and properly implemented, including through adequate border-control mechanisms
- Defence and security forces' weaponry must be properly stored and controlled

- In order to address the increasing link between cross-border crime and terrorism, Member States should strengthen their judicial and border-control capacities, as well as their investigation of arms-trafficking networks
- Further steps should be taken to prevent the flow of small arms and light weapons to conflict regions and the use of IEDs in conflict regions
- There is a need to strengthen partnerships to assist States in conflict regions to monitor and control surplus, accumulations, flows and storage of weapons, IEDs, and their components
- There is a need to establish new partnerships between Government and the private sector to prevent and counter the online trade in illicit weapons.