

Open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee

“The work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) with the Member States of South and South-East Asia pursuant to Security Council resolution 2395 (2017)”

14 February 2022, 10.00 a.m.-1.00 p.m. EST

CTED Presentation

10.10-11.10 Session I: Introductory panel on United Nations dialogue with Member States of South and South-East Asia

Elizabeth Joyce

Chief of Section, Asia-Pacific and the Americas

Thank you, Mr. Chair/Mr. Chen,

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

I wish to join the Committee Chair in welcoming the representatives of the States of South and South-East Asia and other participating Member States.

I would also like to thank our United Nations partners, particularly the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and INTERPOL for their participation in this panel and for all the work they do pursuant to the recommendations made by CTED on behalf of the Committee.

We are hoping that this event will provide an important opportunity to raise awareness among the Member States and other UN entities of all the valuable work that the Member States of South and South East Asia doing to counter terrorism, including pursuant to the Committee’s recommendations, with the emphasis being on their capacity to deliver tangible outcomes and impact. We also hope that this event

will encourage Member States to cooperate further with CTED and its multilateral partners to build on current successes.

At the heart of this effort is CTED's unique dialogue with Member States, conducted on behalf of the Committee, and relying entirely for its success in South and South East Asia on the kind cooperation of the Member States, including:

- their graciousness over the years in opening their counter-terrorism regimes to scrutiny and engaging in the enormous job of work it takes to host CTC assessment visits;**
- their boundless creativity and capacity for innovation as the terrorist threat evolves, together with the tools available readiness to counter it; and**
- their diligence in continuing that engagement with CTED and its partners in follow up to the findings and recommendations of the visits.**

The impact of the work of CTED, and its multilateral and bilateral partners, is thanks to the generous cooperation of the Member States in both regions.

Across both regions, there is also a strong commitment to the need for regional and cross-regional cooperation. Both in our everyday dialogue with the missions in New York and on assessment visits, we have seen that Member States in practice working with each other on that basis and volunteering their expertise and resources to their neighbours.

They have also been incredibly generous in their dialogue with CTED. For example, when India called for greater regional cooperation in the wake of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, CTED approached the Member States of South Asia and suggested

something that had not been tried before: convening judges, prosecutors and police officers of all the Member States of the region to talk about their operational experience in countering terrorism. This conversation continues to this day and influences many aspects of CTED's work. It has never been about building capacity – we leave that to our partners – it is about listening directly to the practitioners to understand their experience – a part of our assessment process, if you will, and about using the convening power of the UN to generate opportunities for cooperation.

Bangladesh was among the first Member States to grasp this unusual concept and volunteered immediately to host the inaugural event. Since then, all South Asian States, with the exception of Afghanistan, have hosted and supported. In addition, Indonesia and Thailand, in gestures of cross-regional cooperation, have also hosted the South Asia group. Indonesia threw open the doors of the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) in Semarang so that South Asian foreign service officials and practitioners could see first-hand how a regional law enforcement training academy could function under national ownership.

CTED later launched a parallel process with civil society organizations in the region, in collaboration with the Global Center on Cooperative Security and the Institute of South Asian Studies at the University of Singapore and with the support of the Government of Norway.

CTED's long-standing focus, at the behest of the CTC, on building meaningful relationships with its partners both inside and outside the UN has led to its work becoming a genuine force multiplier. But the work that the Member States themselves have done in South and South-East Asia has also had a force multiplier effect: Indonesia, Maldives and the Philippines, all visited in 2019, are generating good practices in the way they tackle foreign terrorist fighters, for example, that will have an impact and an influence on other Member States and regions around the world.

Ground-breaking, original work is currently being carried out by South East Asian Member States on the treatment of convicted foreign terrorist fighters in the probation and parole space. They are being assisted by the trilateral group of CTED, UNODC and OCT with the support of Japan and the United Kingdom. The CTC's recommendations in South and South East Asia have triggered work whose influence will extend far beyond the two regions being discussed today.

CTED's latest assessments (including visits conducted on behalf of the Committee to States in both regions and the recently updated Global surveys of Member States' implementation of Security Council resolutions 1373, 1624, and other relevant resolutions) indicate that States in the two regions have:

- made considerable progress in strengthening their criminal-justice and operational capacities to detect, disrupt and prosecute terrorist networks.**
- significantly updated their counter-terrorism legal regimes to incorporate provisions implementing recent Security Council resolutions and the 19 international counter-terrorism instruments.**
- enhanced intelligence-sharing partnerships and cooperation on several issues, including to combat terrorism financing and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and to detect and prevent terrorist movements. A noteworthy example includes the establishment of several bilateral Joint Working Group's on Counter-Terrorism between India and other States of the subregion and beyond.**

- **Adopted National Strategies and Action Plans to Counter Violent Extremism conducive to terrorism, including networks of CVE practitioners to share lessons-learned and good practices.**
- **introduced or are in the process of updating their Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR) systems, in accordance with the relevant ICAO standards and recommended practices and the requirements of Security Council resolutions 2396 (2017) and 2482 (2019).**

These developments have yielded concrete results.

Multiple terrorist attacks have been prevented, and accounts and funds linked to designated individuals and groups have been frozen.

The Trilateral Maritime Patrol between the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia in the Sulu-Celebes Sea has greatly reduced terrorism and piracy in the subregion.

And prosecutors and police have continued to acquire greater experience and strengthen their technical capacity in obtaining and handling electronic evidence across borders in order to bring terrorists to justice.

We commend the work of individual Member States, as well as those of our United Nations and regional partners that have provided critical support over the past few years.

Despite these notable achievements, however, the terrorism threat level continues to rise.

Both ISIL, Al-Qaida and their franchises have shown their determination to strengthen their operational presence in the two subregions, as reflected in ISIL's attempted takeover of the city of Marawi, in the Philippines, in 2017.

From Colombo to Kabul, Jolo to Surabaya, suicide bombers have attacked hotels and places of worship.

Those attacks have increasingly featured women as perpetrators, often operating alongside family members.

There are indications that this may become a growing trend.

Thousands of foreign terrorist fighters left both regions to travel to conflict zones. These individuals continue pose a threat, thus reinforcing the need for the development of comprehensive prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration measures.

And, most recently, as noted by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team in its 29th report, published this month, Afghanistan has the potential to become a safe haven for Al-Qaida and a number of terrorist groups with ties to the subregion.

In South Asia, the overall threat level remains high. Many terrorist groups (including, Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan (ISIL - K)) are active in the subregion.

Much of the terrorist activity in the subregion appears to be ISIL-inspired, if not directed. In its 29th report, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team noted that "terrorist groups [in Afghanistan] enjoy greater freedom there than at any time in recent history".

South-East Asia has been infiltrated by ISIL-inspired foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), and local terrorist groups continue to be inspired by, and pledge allegiance to, ISIL. This subregion remains a source, transit point and destination for ISIL fighters, as well as for militants connected to, inter alia, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Al-Qaida, Jemaah Islamiyah and others.

However, there appears to be cause for some quiet optimism. The Monitoring Team reported in its 29th report that: “Both Indonesia and the Philippines reported significant gains in countering threats from ISIL and Al-Qaida affiliates in the South-East Asia region, leading to an overall decline in terrorist activity and some optimism that the operational capability of the groups may be significantly degraded. At the same time, the threat of lone actor or inspired attacks by radicalized individuals is ongoing.”

In many States, weak investigative and forensic capacities and limited financial and human resources continue to impede progress.

States should also continue to take steps to ensure that counter-terrorism policies and practices are human-rights compliant, including by ensuring that counter-terrorism legislation is sufficiently clear and precise so as not to apply to acts beyond those envisaged by the international counter-terrorism instruments.

And at present, only a few States have developed independent review or oversight bodies to ensure accountability of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, including review national security legislation and practices.

Moving forward, CTED, acting on behalf of the Committee, will continue to:

- (I) identify technical assistance needs and refer priority recommendations to partner entities and organizations to help them design targeted counter-terrorism projects for visited Member States;**
- (II) work with States of the two subregions to promote Council and Committee policy guidelines, international standards, and effective practices; and**
- (III) enhance its engagement with regional bodies such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as technical entities such as the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation, to provide a platform for regional cooperation.**

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Allow me to conclude by reaffirming CTED's determination to help strengthen multilateral, regional and cross-regional collaboration, build new partnerships, and identify further opportunities for cooperation in assisting the States of South and South-East Asia to address the ever-evolving terrorist threat.

Thank you.