

**Open briefing on South-East European Member States’
implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and
the Committee’s visit recommendations**

Wednesday, 28 February 2024, 10.00 a.m.–1.00 p.m. EDT
United Nations Headquarters, ECOSOC Chamber

Opening Statement of

**Assistant Secretary-General Natalia Gherman
Executive Director
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate**

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

**I would like to echo the Chair of the Counter-Terrorism
Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Amar Bendjama, in
welcoming you to the regional open briefing.**

**I also wish to acknowledge the presence of Under-Secretary-
General Vladimir Voronkov of the United Nations Office of
Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and thank him for the close
partnership.**

**The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)
has been engaged in a constructive dialogue with the Southeast
European States on their counter-terrorism efforts for many years.**

Acting on behalf of the Committee, CTED visited most States of the sub-region, assessing implementation efforts of relevant Security Council resolutions and recommending ways to strengthen such measures.

Most recently, CTED conducted an assessment visit to Bulgaria in April 2022.

During the visit, CTED identified several areas where Bulgaria could provide technical assistance and share good practices with other Member States, such as border police cooperation, export control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

CTED also takes stock of counter-terrorism measures taken by all States of the sub-region to maintain an updated regional counter-terrorism profile.

Based on our assessments and dialogue, we are aware that the risk of terrorism attacks in Southeast Europe is relatively low in comparison to other European sub-regions.

We do recognize the risks for the sub-region associated with Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs).

Between 2012 – 2017 around 900 adults and 200 children are estimated to have traveled from Southeast Europe to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq.

There also remains a risk of Southeast Europe being used as a route for FTFs to reach zones in which there are conflicts or in which Da'esh or other terrorist organizations could be active.

In response to these risks, governments of the subregion have implemented several initiatives aimed at preventing the travel of FTFs from, to, and through their territory and sharing information on FTFs travel patterns.

The geographical location of Southeast Europe at the crossroads between Western Europe, Middle East and North Africa, impacts the risks related to the financing of terrorism through the smuggling of drugs, tobacco, arms and human trafficking.

With the support of the United Nations, and international and regional organizations, efforts are under way to improve measures to counter the financing of terrorism in line with Financial Action Task Force recommendations.

Taking into account these risks, it is key that Member States of the subregion continue efforts to enhance cooperation, including with the support of regional organizations such as the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and exchange information.

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

CTED continues to play an important role in facilitating the delivery of technical assistance to build States' capacity to prevent and counter terrorism.

We are working closely with our UN colleagues, as well as with international and regional organizations, to ensure that CTED assessments and recommendations inform the design of their counter-terrorism capacity building programmes in Southeast Europe.

CTED's work also focuses on promoting the global dissemination of good practices, which are in line with Member States' obligations under international law, including international human rights and international humanitarian law.

In this context, I wish to highlight the efforts of the sub-region in adopting a “whole-of-government” approach in the development and implementation of prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration practices, including by integrating civil society organizations into this work, and establishing coordination bodies.

As we continue our collective efforts to address the threat posed by terrorism, it is essential to underscore the importance of human-rights compliant and gender-sensitive counter terrorism approaches.

Multilateralism, information-sharing and cooperation across borders are also key to address the decentralized, transnational and multifaceted character of the terrorism threat.

As part of such efforts, today’s briefing allows us to hear more about the evolution of terrorism-related challenges in the sub-region, as well as latest initiatives at the regional and national levels to address them.

Thank you.