

**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

**H.E. Amar Bendjama
Chair
Counter-Terrorism Committee**

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to this open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. I would like to acknowledge the representatives of Member States, as well as those of international, regional and civil society organizations who have joined us today. Please also note that this briefing is being webcast live on UN Web TV in all official languages of the United Nations and the recording will be available on the Committee’s website afterwards.

This open briefing is held in accordance with Security Council resolution 2617 (2021), in which the Council directs the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (or CTED) to enhance sharing of its findings with Member States and relevant counter-terrorism partners, as appropriate and in consultation with the Committee, through, inter alia, open briefings.

The Committee, supported by CTED, has a global mandate to monitor and assess the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism, as no country or region is immune from the terrorist threat.

This will be the first time the Committee organizes a regional open briefing on South-East Europe, where the risk of terrorist attacks, compared to other subregions of Europe, is low. However, transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and drugs and arms trafficking, which may have linkages to terrorism, represent a major concern.

Several Member States in South-East Europe have received the Committee's assessment visits (most recently, Bulgaria, in 2022), while a number of States of the subregion are undergoing a stocktaking exercise, conducted by CTED.

As a result of these assessments, the Committee is aware of several initiatives that the Governments of the subregion have implemented to respond to the threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters. Such measures include the work of risk assessment units of border police, the sharing of updated information with border control posts on methods used by such fighters and their travel patterns, and the provision of training to the border police.

Most States of the subregion have adopted comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategies, which is a good practice. Some would benefit from expanding the relevant stakeholders concerned with the strategies' implementation and others may benefit from further updates need to keep pace of emerging threats and challenges. Many have also accumulated experience in the development and implementation of strategies for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters and accompanying family members.

At the same time, governments of the subregion are encouraged to continue ensuring that the risks posed by foreign terrorist fighters are not used to justify restrictions on human rights in the name of countering terrorism. The role of civil society actors in designing and implementing counter-terrorism strategies in all States in South-East Europe should be well defined and mutually reinforcing, and

it is imperative that prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration efforts integrate gender, age appropriate and human-rights perspectives.

Most States of the subregion have legislation in place to make it possible to prosecute any preparatory or accessory acts that are conducted in the State with the aim of committing terrorist acts against other States or their citizens outside the State's territory. Good progress has been made in the criminalization of recruitment to terrorism and in adopting practical and preventative measures against terrorist recruitment, which is an area of particular vulnerability.

The regional cooperation in South-East Europe is also enhanced through entering into operational and strategic cooperation agreements with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), which enable States in the region to utilize Europol's analytical tools in counter-terrorism investigations and to participate in Europol analysis projects on foreign terrorist fighters.

The Committee is continuing its constructive dialogue with Member States of South-East Europe on their measures to fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism. To help them to achieve this goal, the Committee has produced several priority recommendations, including those outlined in the 2021 global survey of the implementation by Member States of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions, which is available on the Committee's website.

Excellencies, distinguished representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

I hope that today's briefing will provide an opportunity to take stock of the measures adopted and progress made by Member States of the subregion in the area of implementing relevant Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism and the Committee's recommendations. Considering the international and

regional cooperation mechanisms in place among the Member States of the subregion, the briefing will also provide an opportunity to strengthen collaboration with United Nations bodies and relevant international and regional organizations and other relevant partners, including members of civil society.

I also believe that the open briefing will enable the many entities and organizations which are currently providing or planning to provide counter-terrorism technical assistance in the region to align their projects with the threats and challenges identified by Member States in the subregion, in line with the requirements of relevant Security Council resolutions.

I look forward to the insightful presentations by our speakers and a productive discussion.

Thank you.