

**Statement by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of
the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Open briefing of the United Nations Security Council Counter-
Terrorism Committee on “South-East European Member States’
implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the
Committee’s visit recommendations”**

United Nations Headquarters, New York 28 February 2024

**Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Allow me at the outset to welcome the five new
members of the Security Council’s Counter-Terrorism
Committee — Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea,
Sierra Leone, and Slovenia.**

**My sincere congratulations to Algeria and His Excellency
Ambassador Amar Bendjama, on assuming the role of Chair
of the Committee. I look forward to working closely with you
and all members of the Committee.**

**I would also like to pay tribute to the outgoing members
of the Security Council — Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana,
and especially the United Arab Emirates for their successful
stewardship of this Committee in 2023.**

Mr. Chair,

The past months have seen an increase in terrorism threat levels across Europe, as noted by the Secretary-General in his latest report on the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security.

Fatal attacks took place in Belgium and France. Other non-fatal incidents as well as significant arrests have occurred in several countries across the continent.

There are also concerns that the violent hostilities and humanitarian tragedies unfolding in some parts of the Middle East are fueling mis- and dis-information, hate speech, and are being exploited in terrorist propaganda.

In UNOCT's engagement with European Member States, concerns have been raised over the threat of terrorism based on xenophobia, racism, and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief.

This is apparent, notably, in the context of increasing exploitation of gaming and adjacent platforms by violent extremists.

It is therefore critical that States remain vigilant and intensify their efforts to safeguard communities against the scourge of terrorism, by tackling the spread of violent extremism and foiling future attacks, within a framework based on the rule of law, human rights and gender equality.

I am pleased to note that South-East European countries are actively engaged in international cooperation to prevent and counter terrorism, and that their approach aligns with broader regional and global efforts.

I also commend their constructive role in the consensus eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which concluded in June last year.

Mr. Chair,

Despite the efforts of Member States and international partners, challenges remain – and no countries are immune, irrespective of their experience and resources.

Terrorist groups continue to adapt, utilizing new technologies and tactics. The proliferation of cyber capabilities and other new technologies, the spread of violent extremism online, and the potential for lone-actor attacks, continue to pose significant threats.

The risk of undetected return of foreign terrorist fighters from conflict theatres to their countries of origin, continues to pose substantial security concerns.

Member States in South-East Europe that have repatriated their nationals from camps in northeast Syria are to be commended. These efforts need to expand and accelerate as a matter of urgency.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for the safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of all foreign nationals from Syria and Iraq with alleged links or family ties to terrorist groups. This should be done in line with Member States' respective obligations under international law, including having the best interests of the child as a primary consideration.

The United Nations, through its dedicated Global Framework co-led by UNOCT and UNICEF, stands ready to support Member States, upon their request, and to facilitate the exchange of relevant experience.

Mr. Chair,

UNOCT will continue to engage closely with CTED and this Committee to explore where our programmatic support could add value to the counter-terrorism efforts of South-East European States — including by joining, when possible, the assessment visits conducted by CTED.

We look forward to continuing this partnership and working together with other Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, as well as our partners active in the region, in particular the OSCE and the European Union.

Thank you.