

**2019 OSCE-Wide Counter-Terrorism Conference on  
“Taking Stock of Efforts to Prevent and Counter Terrorism as well as  
Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism in the  
OSCE Area”**

*Bratislava, 25-26 March 2019*

**Opening remarks of**

**Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninx  
Executive Director, CTED**

*Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

Allow me to begin by thanking the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office and the OSCE Transnational Threats Department for convening this conference on regional efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the OSCE area.

OSCE is certainly one of CTED’s closest regional partners. Our two Offices actively cooperate in many areas within the framework of important initiatives aimed at assisting States to enhance their counter-terrorism capacity and implement relevant Security Council resolutions.

*Threat overview*

As underlined in the most recent report of the UN Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security: while ISIL has transformed into a covert network, including in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, it remains a threat as a global organization with centralized leadership.

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Although its territorial losses have removed some sources of revenue, ISIL remains well financed. Some Member States estimate that it still has access to financial reserves of between 50 and 300 million US dollars. Local ISIL cells are expected to be self-financing and to support themselves through a variety of activities, including extortion, kidnapping for ransom or other criminal activity.

ISIL has also retained its information technology expertise and continues to abuse Internet and other ICTs to advance its goals and ideology. One CTED-led initiative, *Tech against Terrorism*, has identified more than 200 online platforms that are actively exploited by terrorist groups.

ISIL retains an interest in attacking aviation and in the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials.

Of all international terrorist groups, it remains the most likely to carry out a large-scale, complex attack.

We have also seen a marked trend towards attacks that may be carried out by only one or a few individuals, using small arms and light weapons or even legal and readily available equipment or vehicles. Such attacks can be extremely difficult to detect and prevent. And they can also have devastating consequences.

### *FTF returnees and relocators – responses and remaining challenges*

CTED's role is to support Member States to address the above threats and challenges by identifying related gaps, vulnerabilities, trends, and strengths and existing good practices in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

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Throughout our work, we clearly see that ISIL-related threat is further increased by returning, relocating or released foreign terrorist fighters. Today, I would like to highlight only a few challenges related to FTF returnees and relocators.

a. *Detecting, identifying, assessing and investigating terrorists (inc. FTFs)*

Over the past few years, remarkable progress has been made in collecting, using and sharing biometric data; digital evidence; financial intelligence; and intelligence collected through special investigative techniques.

In this regard, CTED is currently engaged in a global initiative aimed at strengthening the capacity of central authorities, prosecutors and investigators to preserve and obtain electronic evidence in cross-border counter-terrorism investigations. A key output of this project is the *Practical Guide for Requesting Electronic Evidence Across Borders*.

Thus far, however, this technological progress has outpaced progress made in developing the appropriate laws, policies and institutions needed to ensure that these new tools are used effectively, appropriately and responsibly.

Further efforts are also needed to ensure that these approaches are used in a manner consistent with international human rights and the rule of law.

b. *Prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (PRR)*

Successful efforts to criminalize FTF-related crimes — and to identify, investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes — have, in some countries, brought higher rates of conviction.

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Member States now face new and significant challenges relating to the anticipated release of many individuals successfully convicted of such crimes.

It is therefore vital that States continuously monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of their PRR strategies and programmes, with due regard to the protection of international human rights and taking into consideration age and gender sensitivities.

*c. Family members associated with FTFs*

The numbers of family members who have been brought to, or born in, the conflict zones; the differing roles that women have played in terrorist organizations and activities; and the ways in which children have been exploited are also unprecedented. As victims, these children require significant, tailored and long-term protection, rehabilitation and reintegration assistance.

Many States that are most impacted by issues relating to children and terrorism require assistance to put in place appropriate strategies, legislative measures, institutions and resources and to expand and strengthen their welfare, child protection services and juvenile justice systems.

With regards to the gender perspective, I would like to highlight CTED's latest Trends Report, issued in February, on "Gender Dimensions of the Response to Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters". The report makes clear that major gaps remain in our efforts to understand and address the gender dimensions of terrorism and violent extremism.

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It is therefore essential that we continue to refine our policy guidance, identify good practices, and assist Member States to enhance their capacity to deal with these challenges in a gender-sensitive and human-rights compliant manner.

*Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,*

We continue to face many challenges, but we must also recognize our achievements.

Member States and the international community have made remarkable progress in their efforts to counter the evolving threat of terrorism, including new challenges stemming from returning and relocating FTFs and their family members.

Here, I would like to highlight the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and CTED to develop the *Addendum to the guiding principles on foreign terrorist fighters*, adopted on 27 December 2018.

It is intended to serve as a practical tool to assist States to address the FTF phenomenon, including by addressing the challenges posed by FTF returnees and relocators.

Its adoption followed extensive consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including from the wider UN membership, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

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The addendum provides guidance to Member States on effective responses to the evolving FTF phenomenon, focusing on measures to be taken in a number of areas, including: border security and information-sharing; countering terrorist narratives; countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism; risk assessments and intervention programmes; judicial measures, including PRR; and international cooperation.

We are pleased to invite you *today* to attend our side event, organized jointly with the European Union, to discuss the implementation of the new principles in the OSCE area.

*Concluding my remarks*, I wish to emphasize that recent shifts in the global terrorism threat landscape call for renewed efforts to leverage and maximize our capabilities and resources in an integrated and coordinated manner.

Open dialogue, enhanced information exchange, genuine international and regional cooperation are all key to overcoming the threat.

However, it has become clear that a more comprehensive and holistic approach is needed to prevent and combat the indiscriminate violence of international terrorist groups.

Through its recent country assessments and dialogue with Member States, and on the basis of information provided by its partners (including member entities of its Global Research Network), CTED has also identified an increase, in several Member States and regions, in the threat posed by terrorists whose motivations include racism, intolerance, misogyny, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. *Most*

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*recently, the UN Security Council condemned in the strongest terms such heinous and cowardly terrorist attack that took place in New Zealand, on 15 March 2019, resulting in at least 50 killed and many wounded.*

Terrorism must be fought on multiple fronts.

Our policies and methods must also employ a broader perspective that is focused on developing close partnerships with civil society and private industry.

Community engagement and resilience are also essential in responding to, and countering, the spread of violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Lastly, I wish to reiterate the position of the Security Council that all our counter-terrorism and CVE measures must of course be implemented in strict compliance with international law, in particular human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law.

*Thank you.*

*I wish you all fruitful discussions.*