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**COUNTER TERRORISM COMMITTEE
OPEN BRIEFING CONCERNING “NEW INITIATIVES TO
ADDRESS THE FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS
CHALLENGE”**

New York, 19 June 2015

**Ambassador Murmokaitė [Chair of the Counter Terrorism
Committee],
Secretary General Jagland [of the Council of Europe],
Executive Director Laborde [of the Counter-Terrorism
Committee Executive Directorate],
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I am pleased to join you to speak on this critical issue. I
thank Ambassador Murmokaitė for convening this timely
briefing to the wider membership and audience.**

**The phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters poses a
serious and growing threat to international peace and
security. The task of stemming these flows of terrorist
fighters touches on some of the most challenging elements
of international cooperation and collaboration. In a world of
ever-growing global mobility, effective counter-measures
demand cooperation at every level – from the national to the
international arena, from the political to the technical sphere;
from capitals to border crossings. In brief, we must identify
new ways to work together and then mobilise actions across
borders in all meanings of that word.**

The international community has growingly shown its determination to take this threat seriously – not least through the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 last September. This resolution included important measures requiring Member States to set up criminal law mechanisms. This includes criminalising preparatory acts connected to travelling abroad for terrorist purposes.

Since September, the threat of foreign terrorist fighters has become even more serious. In recent months, the ranks of Da'esh and other terrorist groups has grown. The Security Council's Al-Qaida Sanctions Monitoring Team estimates a 70 per cent increase in the number of foreign terrorist fighters worldwide between the middle of 2014 and March 2015. There are now more than 25,000 foreign terrorist fighters from around 100 Member States who have traveled to Syria and Iraq, as well as to Afghanistan, Yemen and Libya.

This means that more foreign terrorist fighters are on the front-lines and that a bigger pool of manpower available to terrorists. This is a menace not only to countries of destination, but also to the countries they transit and, if they return, to their countries of origin.

No country can tackle this huge challenge alone. No country can afford to be complacent. That is why it is so important to consider new and dynamic initiatives to counter this evolving threat. There are some critical areas where new and strengthened initiatives will be essential:

First, Member States must enhance cooperation on exchange and sharing of information.

Second, Member States must develop or enhance robust border controls and effective criminal justice systems.

Third, in all of their efforts Member States must comply with the rule of law and human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. We should never compromise on the necessity to base criminal responsibility on clear and precise definitions in line with the respect for human rights.

This is critical. When counter-terrorism efforts neglect the rule of law and violate fundamental rights, they not only betray the values they seek to uphold. They may also further fuel violent extremism. Respect of human rights and the rule of law is an essential and inseparable part of successful counter-terrorism action.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations system will continue to effectively support Member States in this area.

Security Council resolution 2178 requested the Counter-Terrorism Committee, with the support of CTED, to facilitate technical assistance to Member States. This assistance is to be directed at strengthening Member States' capacities vis-à-vis violent extremism and the flow of foreign terrorist fighters.

Subsequent to the 29 May Security Council Presidential Statement, the CTITF Office was asked to develop, in close consultation with CTED, a United Nations capacity-building plan for countering the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. This plan is to contain recommendations for assisting the most affected Member States. It should be based on the analyses and reports produced by CTED and by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team.

It will set out a priority list of capacity-building and technical assistance programmes to be carried out by UN entities over the next 24 months.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The threat of foreign terrorist fighters requires comprehensive and multi-faceted responses. UN capacity-building has to draw from the expertise of the UN family and other national and international actors. It also has to benefit from cutting-edge analysis by think-tanks and academic institutions. I welcome CTED's initiative to establish a global research network to monitor trends and developments related to terrorism and counter-terrorism.

Further, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre's project on "Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters' Phenomenon in Syria" is aimed at understanding the drivers of this phenomenon. By this we can better assist Member States to craft better policy responses.

The Security Council is now taking significant steps to enrich our discussions on this issue. Council initiatives will continue to be valuable, not least the upcoming Counter-Terrorism Committee Special Meeting on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, to be held in Madrid on 27 and 28 July.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In closing, I will add one further reflection.

At its heart, the phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters is also connected to youth disillusionment and marginalisation. Ultimately, it is young people today who are the most vulnerable to radicalization and to recruitment into foreign terrorist fighters' ranks. We have to address the conditions conducive to young men and women being seduced by the rhetoric of violent extremism. We have to ask ourselves why do young men and women decide to join extremist movements ready to kill fellow human beings?

The underlying drivers of violent extremism need to be addressed at the global, regional, national and local levels. Terrorism is often associated with weak rule of law and lack of respect of human rights. Therefore, building effective,

accountable and inclusive governance and institutions is an important element of preventive action.

Most foreign terrorist fighters are young males aged 15 to 35 motivated by extremist ideologies. However, we should also address the factors leading women and girls to join the ranks of Da'esh and other terrorist groups.

The Secretary-General intends to present a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to the General Assembly later this year. I hope this will stimulate discussion and deliberations on this crucial challenge in today's troubled world.

The purpose of today's briefing is to support and promote the efforts of Member States and regional organizations in this struggle. The briefing also provides a forum for interactive discussion on one of our most pressing common endeavours.

I look forward to learning about the steps taken by other actors, not least by Secretary General Jagland of the Council of Europe, to establish effective criminal law responses to terrorism and to the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. It will be particularly interesting to learn how the Council and

Member States have addressed the human rights challenges posed by these measures.

I wish you a successful and productive meeting, as we strive with renewed energy and determination to counter this challenge to international peace and security.

Thank you.
