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Promoting regional  
security in South Asia:  
tackling terrorism and  
violent extremism together



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## Promoting counter-terrorism cooperation in South Asia

Recent years have seen a dramatic rise in terrorist activities around the world, including in South Asia. Effective and timely international and regional cooperation is essential for States to prevent terrorist acts and bring terrorists to justice. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), with the assistance of the Global Center on Cooperative Security and other partners, has been assisting South Asia in these efforts in a unique and concrete fashion for over a decade.

What started as a series of regional workshops, bringing together judges, prosecutors and police officers, has since grown considerably. Through 12 workshops in 9 years, over 300 judges, prosecutors, and police from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have shared experiences, lessons learned, and best practices on how to counter terrorism in their region and beyond. The aim of the workshops is to promote habits of regional cooperation, expand professional networks, and develop a regional platform for the delivery of technical assistance and training.

Over the years, these discussions have played a vital role in CTED's assessment of counter-terrorism capacities and priorities in the region, as well as the identification of emerging trends and threats. The gatherings serve as a laboratory for innovation by generating and testing new technical ideas, many of which inform the core work of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee, UN entities, and implementing partners. The workshops have focused on a broad range of topics, usually proposed by the participants, including anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT); effective interview and interrogation techniques; the education and training of law enforcement personnel; foreign terrorist fighters; gender dimensions of the criminal justice response to terrorism; and the collection and use of electronic evidence in terrorism cases.

A parallel process in support of the practitioners' dialogue was launched in 2011 by the Global Center, in partnership with the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National

University of Singapore, bringing together key experts, academics, and practitioners to explore national and civil society responses. With support from the government of Norway, this initiative informed and supported CTED's work on the basis that non-governmental actors and practitioner networks can be valuable partners in developing cooperative efforts to address terrorism and violent extremism, complementing more formal regional initiatives. In 2018, in an initiative funded by the government of Japan, CTED and the Global Center plan to bring practitioners and civil society leaders together to discuss criminal justice issues and to further promote practitioner engagement with civil society.

CTED greatly appreciates the commitment to this innovative initiative of the eight States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), as well as the SAARC Secretariat, which participates as an observer. The Executive Directorate is also grateful for the generous support provided by Australia, Canada, Denmark, India, Japan, Norway, Sweden, and the United States of America. Participating entities have included numerous United Nations Member States, INTERPOL, OHCHR, the UNODC Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB), and the pro bono contributions of Baker McKenzie.

Key objectives: (1) promote cooperation among counter-terrorism practitioners in the region, (2) establish the groundwork for the institutionalization of cooperation among law enforcement officials and regional counter-terrorism practitioners, and (3) create the conditions for the enhancement of regional law enforcement capacities to address terrorism and related crimes throughout South Asia.

## Adding value through dialogue and capacity building

The South Asia cooperation has generated several follow-up initiatives, which have expanded the dialogue beyond the core workshops, spawning capacity-building based on the findings of the workshops and delivered by CTED's implementing partners. These include:

- A series of expert and practitioner workshops that allowed for enhanced cooperation among critical expert stakeholders on key issues relating to countering terrorism and violent extremism
- Technical assistance facilitated by CTED for Member States generated by the workshops' findings, including in the areas of adjudication of terrorism cases, and enhancing counter-terrorism investigations and prosecutions
- Technical assistance on strengthening criminal justice responses for the protection and support of witnesses and victims in criminal proceedings related to terrorism, delivered by UNODC/TPB and the UNODC Regional Office for South Asia, in cooperation with CTED
- Sitting Supreme Court Justices convened for the first time in United Nations history on 10 March 2016 in an open briefing in New York organized by the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee on the special role that Supreme Court Justices play in strengthening States' capacity in the effective adjudication of complex terrorism cases. Supreme Court Justices from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka participated, as well as a sitting Supreme Court Justice of the host country
- Extensive work with the national judicial academies of South Asia on enhancing capacity through workshops and the publication of toolkits for judges to assist them in adjudicating complex terrorism cases, including the launch of a AML/CFT toolkit for the judges of Nepal in early 2017, and a regional toolkit scheduled for publication in 2018.