

2023 United Nations Counter-terrorism Week

Side event: Six Years After UNSCR 2349: Examining the Implementation of Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategies for Persons Associated with Boko Haram/JAS, ISWAP and Other Terrorist Groups

21 June 2023, 08:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Opening remarks of

**Assistant Secretary-General Natalia Gherman
Executive Director
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to thank Cameroon, Chad, the Niger, Nigeria, and the Executive Secretariat of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for jointly convening this important event to commemorate the adoption of Security Council resolution 2349 (2017) on the terrorism threat in the Lake Chad Basin region, in particular its aspects relating to the screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of people associated with terrorist groups.

Terrorism in Africa has evolved from small cells conducting covert attacks to larger groups able to control territories and their population. We have witnessed this new paradigm in the Lake Chad Basin region with Boko Haram/Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) and the so-called Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which is considered Da'esh's strongest province outside the Levant.

This new paradigm creates new challenges for the Lake Chad Basin country authorities who have been handling very large numbers of individuals who are either arrested or who express a wish to exit terrorist groups for different reasons. In the context of Nigeria, for example, up to 90,000 Boko Haram fighters and individuals associated with them, such as dependants, have surrendered to the authorities of Borno State since the summer of 2021, after calls from the local Governor to do so. Thousands of people have similarly surrendered in Cameroon, Chad and the Niger.

Under the relevant Security Council resolutions and international counter-terrorism instruments to which they are a party, States have an obligation to domesticate a series of terrorist offences. With respect to suspected terrorists, Member States are required to bring terrorists to justice and are called upon to develop and implement comprehensive and tailored prosecution, rehabilitation, and

reintegration strategies and protocols, in line with their obligations under international law, including with respect to returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters and their spouses and children who accompany them. Not all persons will be prosecuted as a result of the screening process, but the process should address the question of whether or not a person should be investigated further.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

There is an increasing interest from African and global stakeholders in possible interactions between counter-terrorism and transitional justice frameworks and approaches in armed conflict situations to ensure accountability and justice for the victims and to achieve reconciliation.

Transitional justice recognizes that criminal justice on its own, while important, is insufficient to fully satisfy the justice claims of victims and should be complemented by truth-seeking mechanisms, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. In the Lake Chad Basin, local transitional justice-inspired initiatives are already being implemented. Today's event will also be an opportunity to reflect on whether these initiatives should be leveraged to address the impact of terrorism and whether they contribute to guaranteeing sustainable peace and reconciliation in the region.

The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate remains committed to continuing to support Lake Chad Basin countries in their implementation of resolution 2349 and other relevant Security Council resolutions, building on the critical progress already made through efforts with our close partners from the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and thanks to the commendable commitment of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria to effectively address these complex exit strategy issues.

Thank you.