

2021 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week

Side event: “Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism, and countering violent extremism”

Friday, 25 June 2021, 12.30 pm–2.00 p.m., EDT

Concept note

I. Introduction

1. The 2021 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week will focus on the theme, “Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies: Addressing the Challenges of the New Decade.” It will be complemented by a number of side events, which will facilitate discussion of the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy:
 - Addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism;
 - Measures to prevent and combat terrorism;
 - Measures to build States’ capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard;
 - Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.
2. Security Council resolution 2129 (2013) directs the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to identify emerging issues, trends, and developments in consultation with relevant partners, and advise the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) on practical ways for Member States to implement relevant counter-terrorism resolutions. In doing so, CTED incorporates the latest evidence-based research in its work and publications through close engagement with its Global Research Network (GRN) and other partners. CTED’s publications (including Trends Alerts; Trends Reports; Analytical Briefs; and Research Digests) aim to keep Member States updated on evolving trends and challenges in counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE).
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the world with a generational challenge that has significantly impacted all aspects of the geopolitical and policy landscape, including counter-terrorism and CVE policy measures. CTED has been at the forefront of monitoring and analysing the impacts of the pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism, and CVE. In this regard, CTED’s series of reports on the COVID-19 pandemic (published in June and December 2020 and forthcoming in June 2021) has provided policymakers with an analysis of the key short, medium, and long-term impacts of the pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism, and CVE.

4. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Member States and the international community have continued to face a wide range of challenges — distinct in scale, intensity, and impact — which have also exacerbated humanitarian and other socio-economic crises around the world. Against this backdrop, it is imperative to understand and analyse the impacts of the pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism, and CVE and better integrate evidence-based research on this issue into existing counter-terrorism policies and practices.
5. Although the impacts of the pandemic are not consistent across Member States or regions (with specific differences evident in conflict and non-conflict areas, as well as resource-rich and resource-scarce States), the pandemic remains a global challenge, which thus requires a coordinated global response. CTED’s analysis suggests that there as yet remains a lack of evidence to draw comprehensive conclusions regarding the impacts of the pandemic on terrorism and counter-terrorism.
6. Initial analysis suggests, however, that terrorist groups continue to look for opportunities to exploit the social restrictions and political instability resulting from the pandemic. Ongoing economic downturns continue to exacerbate poverty, inequality, and existing grievances in several regions, thereby creating the potential for fuelling conditions conducive to terrorism and radicalization to violence.
7. Several pandemic-related policies and emergency measures have also faced criticism for human rights overreach, suppression of dissent, and possible abuses. This situation must be addressed. Moreover, counter-terrorism resources continue to be diverted to aid public health responses. This can be detrimental for fragile States requiring security assistance and capacity-building to combat terrorism. Despite progress in vaccinations in some Member States, outbreaks continue, and inequalities in vaccination coverage may emerge as a potential challenge.
8. There is a need for stronger collaboration and cooperation to ensure a more cohesive response to address the impacts of the pandemic, while ensuring that counter-terrorism responses are targeted, human rights compliant, and gender-sensitive. In this regard, the international community needs to enhance engagement with the research community and other relevant stakeholders, such as civil society and private sector.

II. Objective

9. The aim of the side is to consider questions on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism, and CVE:
 - How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the threat of terrorism across different regions of the world?
 - How can we uphold and promote human rights during the pandemic, in light of instances of human rights overreach and violations?
 - What impact will the pandemic have on the efforts of Member States and the international community to counter terrorism and violent extremism effectively?

- What are some of the new and/or novel challenges relating to the pandemic and counter-terrorism that the international community needs to address?

III. Format of discussions and topics

10. H.E. Tarek Ladeb, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, will deliver opening remarks. Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of CTED, will also deliver remarks, focusing on CTED 's work on this issue.
11. The event will also bring together several members of CTED's GRN to share their research with policymakers, practitioners, civil society and other researchers, facilitating an interactive discussion on key trends and challenges pertaining to the impacts of the pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism, and CVE. The event will thus include opening remarks; remarks from Assistant Secretary-General Coninsx; presentations by GRN members; an interactive discussion; and concluding remarks.
12. The side event will be held via Microsoft Teams. For participation of Member States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, GRN members and other interested experts, please fill out the form available [here](#) to RSVP. If you are not able to participate in the event, you will be able to submit questions to the panellists via e-mail to cted-par@un.org by COB 23 June 2021.
13. An annotated agenda and meeting documentation will be posted on the Committee's website (<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/>).

IV. Date and venue

14. The virtual open meeting will be accessible via Microsoft Teams on June 25, 2021, from 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm EDT. This event will be streamed live on UN Web TV. A recording of the event will be made available on the Committee's website after the event.

V. Communications

15. CTED will promote the side event through the appropriate channels. A press release may be issued following the event.