



VIRTUAL COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

6-10 JULY 2020

Webinar I:

“Post COVID-19 World Contours, Pivot Points and Benefits of Multilateral Collaboration”

Monday, 6 July 2020

Statement of

H.E. Mr. Kais Kabtani
Chair, Counter-Terrorism Committee

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to participate in today’s opening session of the Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee.

I would like to thank the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism for organizing this virtual event, which reflects the continued engagement of the United Nations to maintain Counter-terrorism at the top of its priorities, while safeguarding public health.

Having to meet virtually is of course a sign of the unprecedented times we are living in. The COVID-19 pandemic is a generation-defining crisis that has impacted lives and livelihoods around the world and still affects every aspect of our daily routines.



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In the midst of these changes, the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism continue to be felt worldwide.

The Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week provides a vital forum which brings together Member States, United Nations officials, international and regional organizations, and civil society representatives to discuss strategic, operational, and practical challenges in countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism during a global pandemic.

I look forward to hearing today from a diverse range of stakeholders as we take stock of the impact of the pandemic on the terrorist landscape and Member States' efforts to address it.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the pandemic, the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate (CTED) have continued to work with Member States and other United Nations entities, as well as with international and regional organizations, and civil society towards our common goal of countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The Committee, supported by CTED, deployed tireless efforts to ensure that the Security Council remains informed, responsive and united in preventing and countering the terrorist threat in these exceptional circumstances.

CTED has also continued to monitor, promote and facilitate Member States' implementations of the relevant Council resolutions, within a human-rights compliant

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and gender-sensitive framework. This close collaboration demonstrates our shared determination to secure a world free of terrorism, and our shared resolve to continue supporting Member States and other partners in addressing the threats and challenges posed by COVID-19.

Drawing on CTED's engagement with Member States and its other key partners – including the members of its Global Research Network – CTED recently published an analytical report on COVID-19, terrorism, and counter-terrorism. The document describes how terrorist groups have sought to exploit the pandemic, as well as the potential short-term and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on counter-terrorism and CVE.

The pandemic may have resulted in temporarily limiting the operational activities of terrorist groups, by reducing their capacities to conduct offenses against big crowds and soft targets and by disrupting their movements, resources and chains of supply.

However, COVID19 is also posing several challenges on counter terrorism efforts globally.

Pandemic-related restrictions have increased social isolation, causing people to spend more time online. Terrorist groups — including those affiliated with ISIL— are exploiting this opportunity to spread their propaganda through virtual platforms.

We are also witnessing a rise in hate speech and hate crimes targeting minorities and vilifying certain groups, often fuelled by conspiracy theories spread online. In



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this regard, I welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to counter the current "infodemic" of misinformation which also calls to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms against censorship.

With global attention focused on pandemic-related challenges, terrorist groups are seeking to capitalize on the situation by undermining State authority and launching new attacks.

Furthermore, the sudden downturn in the global economy and the growing scarcity of resources and services are exacerbating socio-economic, gender and other inequalities.

These conditions can increase existing grievances and create the environment for radicalization to violence that can be exploited by terrorist groups.

This can be further exacerbated in humanitarian settings where people escaping terrorist groups and conflicts are living in volatile conditions, leaving them vulnerable to even further violence and trauma and increasing the risk of their radicalization and exploitation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Like terrorism, the COVID-19 pandemic is a global phenomenon. We must therefore act together in a unified and collective manner, on the basis of scientific fact and evidence-based policies that are in full compliance with human rights.



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I welcome, in this regard, the recent adoption of the Security Council resolution 2532 presented by Tunisia and France, which demands a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations and supports the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives and Special Envoys in that respect, including the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire.

However, it is essential to bear in mind that this general and immediate cessation of hostilities and the humanitarian pause do not apply to military operations against terrorist groups designated by the Council and all individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with them.

This resolution provides an opportunity for peaceful conflict resolution while also maintaining the focus on the most pressing need: the delivery of services and public health measures. In this regard, it takes into account the disproportionate negative impact of the pandemic, notably the socio-economic impact, on women and girls, children, refugees, internally displaced persons, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the enormous challenges that it poses, the COVID-19 pandemic may also provide us with an opportunity to learn from the lessons of the past and to reimagine a better and more sustainable future.



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In response to our current transnational challenges, including terrorism, we must identify global solutions that are adapted to our new reality.

We can achieve this by reaffirming and strengthening our diplomatic engagements and multilateral ties, as well as promoting partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including civil society. The United Nations remains pivotal to our common efforts to strengthen collaboration, unity, and solidarity among Member States.

The counter-terrorism community should be agile and focus on developing coordinated, multidimensional, and tailored solutions, while upholding principles of mutual assistance and shared global values.

Moving forward, the international community must work together to develop responses to counter-terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism that are based on a comprehensive and integrated whole-of-society approach, place human rights and gender responsiveness at the forefront, and promote equality, human dignity, and pluralism.

I look forward to strengthening existing partnerships, both within the United Nations and between the United Nations and Member States, and other relevant stakeholders as we continue to work together to realize our collective vision of a world free from terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.



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In conclusion, allow me to wish you and your families the best of health in these difficult circumstances, and I look forward to our discussions today and throughout this virtual week.

Thank you.