



# UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

## **Statement of Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

### **Meeting with the EU Council Working Party on Terrorism (International Aspects - COTER) Brussels, 7 December 2017, 13:45**

Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Chair of the EU Council's Terrorism Working Party COTER, as well as the other members of COTER, for having invited me to brief you on the work of the United Nations on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism, and its cooperation with the European Union.

Just in September, you had the opportunity to get an update on the work of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and of other UN entities such as UNODC. Only two months have passed since—my two first months heading the Office of Counter-Terrorism—and it already feels like a long time, as we have launched important new initiatives under the leadership of Secretary-General Guterres.

Over the next minutes, I will inform you of these initiatives, our capacity-building work, and our cooperation with the EU. I also look forward to the opportunity to listen to your comments and priorities, and respond to any questions you may have.

Excellencies,

I am here today in Brussels after having spent the rest of the week in Mali and Mauritania. By making this my first official trip in my capacity as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, I wanted to highlight the importance we give to supporting the Sahel, a region that is suffering so much from the scourge of terrorism, and to our partnership with the European Union.

As Secretary-General Guterres said during his remarks at the African Union-European Union Summit, “national governments must lead our response, but multilateral cooperation and capacity building are crucial.”

If we are to successfully help the Sahel to prevent the spread of terrorism and counter it effectively, we need to work together. Europe, and the rest of the international community, have their own security at risk if the situation continues to deteriorate.

This is why I welcome the EU’s renewed efforts to assist the G5 Sahel, and wish that the Summit convened by President Macron next week will be a success.

I also hope that it will serve to gain momentum and develop a success story of multilateral counter-terrorism capacity-building cooperation, EU-EU Member States-UN-G5 Sahel, with real impact on the ground. Your support in mobilizing political will and resources would be critical.

Excellencies,

The UN Secretary-General and Member States agree on the need to make counter-terrorism one of our highest priorities. This is why the UN General Assembly created in June this year the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the first reform initiative of Secretary-General Guterres.

This is also why, during the High-Level Week of the General Assembly in September, one hundred and fifty-two Heads of State and Government, about eighty per cent of all UN countries, called upon the international community to step up international cooperation against the scourge of terrorism.

To support these efforts, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism is intended to provide leadership in the UN’s work to address counter-terrorism; significantly enhance coordination and coherence across relevant UN bodies and international organizations; and strengthen capacity-building activities in support of Member States, always upon their request.

My Office coordinates 38 entities, making the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which I Chair, the largest coordination mechanism in the UN – reaching across the peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian pillars of the Organization. To further strengthen this coordination, the Secretary-General is developing a new UN system-wide Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, which will institutionalize our coordination efforts, and further strengthen our “All of UN” efforts.

While enhanced coordination is important within the UN System, we also need greater unity in the international community on counter-terrorism. As Secretary-General Guterres said in his recent speech in London, “governments and security agencies [have] to collaborate far more effectively in

fighting terror, while respecting human rights... It is time for a new era of intelligence-sharing, and collaboration to save lives.”

To contribute to this effort, the Secretary-General will convene in June 2018 the first-ever UN Summit of Heads of Counter-Terrorism agencies, to forge new partnerships and build relationships of trust. We count on the support of the European Union and your Member States to make this event a success.

Excellencies,

Despite military pressure, the threat emanating from terrorist groups is evolving and increasing.

The ISIL core in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic is in increasingly rapid military decline. However, it has anticipated defeat and adjusted its modus operandi for the next stage of activities.

ISIL continues to emphasize external attacks perpetrated by its members and sympathizers as part of its response, and is adopting a more networked approach, with decision-making increasingly delegated to affiliates and cells. While its media and propaganda capabilities have also been weakened, its capacity to inspire attacks endures.

ISIL core has allowed some individuals to leave the conflict zone and directed them around the globe. These travellers seem to have been briefed on how to act when they encounter government authorities to avoid being deported to countries where they may be arrested. ISIL may be seeking to establish a presence in different regions through these Relocators.

Returnees present also a challenge, even if it has not yet materialized in large numbers. Some Member States are concentrating on the threat posed by extremists who never traveled to the conflict zone. It is this category of extremists, not Foreign Terrorist Fighters, who have driven the higher pace of attacks in Europe in 2017.

Meanwhile, Al-Qaida networks and affiliates, particularly in West Africa, East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula remained resilient, in addition to the well-established presence of Al-Qaida core in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

While the strategic competition between ISIL and Al-Qaida continues, fighters’ shifting alliances and cooperation on the tactical level in several regions also allow them to move between various groups. Some re-locating ISIL fighters may join and strengthen branches of Al-Qaida.

Excellencies,

While countering these threats remains fundamental, preventing them is more crucial than ever.

The United Nations has adopted a common framework to coordinate and strengthen the efforts of the international community and individual states for structural prevention, including through preventive diplomacy.

This preventive approach championed by Secretary-General Guterres can also help through the prevention of violent extremism that can be conducive to terrorism. Such an approach may help to address the conditions conducive to terrorism highlighted under Pillar 1 of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

To strengthen and give content to this Pillar, the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism included more than 70 recommendations, built around seven key areas. Solving conflicts through inclusive political processes; addressing socio-economic grievances; supporting youth; and strengthening good governance and the rule of law are important complements to traditional counter-terrorism measures.

Excellencies,

Listening and acting on Member States' priorities will be my priority. A comprehensive "All of UN" assistance for Member States, both from UN Headquarters and the field, will be critical if we want to be effective.

This is why we are focusing on developing well-coordinated and results-oriented capacity-building projects, many of them addressing areas of common interest to the EU and the UN, including on foreign terrorist fighters and returnees; preventing violent extremism; border controls; addressing the terrorist use of Internet; and countering the financing of terrorism, among others. Geographically, we are focusing our action in Africa, Central Asia, and South and South-East Asia.

I would like to present four areas where I strongly believe that our UN-EU counter-terrorism cooperation could be strengthened—and look forward to your support to mobilize resources in this regard:

**First**, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism is conducting important work under OCT's Integrated Assistance for Counter-Terrorism—or I-ACT—in Mali and the G5 Sahel countries.

At the regional level, the OCT has helped develop a G5 Sahel I-ACT framework, composed of 9 strategic, mutually reinforcing projects that respond to the stated needs of the G5 Sahel.

At the national level, OCT is supporting the Government of Mali in finalizing its Counter-Terrorism and PVE Comprehensive National Strategy and its Plan of Action.

The implementation of these two frameworks, and the counter-terrorism and PVE projects envisaged in the implementation phase, will require substantive resources.

**Second**, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, taking an “All-of-UN” approach, has developed a Security Council-mandated comprehensive Foreign Terrorist Fighters Capacity Building Implementation Plan by mobilising and coordinating the efforts of 38 abovementioned United Nations entities, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the ISIL and Al-Qaida Monitoring Team.

The plan addresses the full life-cycle of foreign terrorist fighters, including a number of projects related to information sharing, Advanced Passenger Information, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration to support Member States in their efforts to address returnees.

New projects have also been added which specifically address women and children returnees through a human rights-based and gender-sensitive approach.

The latest version of the Plan includes 50 capacity building projects submitted by 13 United Nations entities with a total budget of 107 million dollars over 5 years. My Office has provided a total of 9 per cent of the funding for the Implementation Plan, but overall the Plan is still only 41 per cent funded.

The European Union has generously pledged to fund one of this projects on management of violent extremist prisoners and the prevention of radicalization in prisons.

We hope that the EU and EU Member States can consider supporting other projects included in this Plan.

**Third**, the Office of Counter-Terrorism is also working with UNESCO on a project on “Prevention of Violent Extremism through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia,” both a topic and a geographical focus that are of primary interest to the European Union.

The overall objective of this project is to empower young women and men with the values, knowledge, capacities and skills to hold exchanges, communicate online and offline, and cooperate across social and cultural boundaries. Furthermore, the project aims to enable young women and men to become responsible citizens, resilient to any form of abuse or manipulation, including radicalization and violent extremism, and to mobilize critical thinking to counter radicalization and recruitment.

The total budget of the project is approximately 1.9 million dollars. The Government of Canada has already provided nearly 600,000 dollars.

**A fourth** example of our work is the OCT project on the Comprehensive Implementation of the Joint Plan of Action (JPoA) for Central Asia, which aims at operationalizing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the region.

Partly thanks to the support of the European Union, two phases of this project were successfully conducted and capped by a ministerial conference chaired by the UN Secretary-General in June. A third phase has now been developed for which new funding will be required.

Excellencies,

Through the coordinating role of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, to the important assessment work of the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, to the capacity-building initiatives of the OCT's Counter-Terrorism Centre and UNODC, the UN system will step up its efforts and focus on the balanced implementation of all four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

To effectively implement the Strategy and have impact against the increasingly transnational threat of terrorism, we must focus on prevention and strengthening multilateral cooperation.

We share many priorities. Over the past years, through a number of mechanisms, including the annual EU-UN Dialogue on Counter-Terrorism, we have been strengthening our institutional ties, exchanging information and strategic priorities, and collaborating programmatically.

More needs to be done. It is crucial that Member States, including EU countries, mobilize financial and technical assistance resources to support UN counter-terrorism capacity building efforts in the most affected countries and regions.

The Secretary-General has been clear in his recent speech in London, we need to combat “the global threat of terrorism, without compromising our respect for human rights,” and our “watchwords should therefore be unity, solidarity and collaboration.”

I count on your support and thank you for your attention.

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