



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)

Statement by

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Quarterly Briefing to Member States by United Nations Global Counter- Terrorism Coordination
Compact Entities

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Colleagues and friends,

I am pleased to welcome you to the first UNOCT briefing to Member States this year. We planned to have it much earlier but had to postpone due to the COVID-19 crisis.

I hope that you, your families and colleagues are safe, healthy and keeping your spirits high despite these challenging circumstances. I would like to express my deepest sympathy and the solidarity of my Office with all those who have been tragically affected by the COVID-19 pandemic around the world.

The Secretary-General has called the pandemic a ‘human crisis’, with multifaceted consequences – on peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. Its disproportionate impact on already marginalized groups, women, youth and minorities, is particularly alarming.

The Secretary-General has also underlined the importance of facing together what may be the biggest global crisis since the Second World War, just as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of our organization and reflect on the “World we want and the United Nations we need”.

Together with our partners from the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, we are following closely the impact of the pandemic on the terrorist landscape and Member States’ efforts to address it.

The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire to fight the virus and ensure vital humanitarian support is a unique opportunity to durably break the cycles of violence and desperation in which terrorism can thrive.

Terrorists see it differently. The crisis has highlighted and even exacerbated a number of ongoing trends: from ISIL, Al-Qaida and their affiliates' continuous exploitation of local grievances and conflicts, and increased online messaging and recruitment, to the growing terrorist threat from violent right-wing extremist groups.

I am particularly concerned that the spread of the virus and related fear will further deteriorate the already dire security, human rights and humanitarian situation in the camps and places of detention holding suspected foreign terrorist fighters and associated women and children in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. Repatriation, especially of children, remains a matter of utmost urgency.

We look forward to a dialogue with Member States to develop a common understanding of short to long term implications of the pandemic on counter-terrorism, as well as Member States' priorities in this regard. Listening to your priorities is a very important task for us.

But today, I would like to focus my briefing on two key areas: the second counter terrorism week and regional conferences; and key updates on our partnerships and capacity-building efforts.

Firstly, I would like to inform you about the postponement of the second Counter-Terrorism Week.

As you know the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 72/284, was issued on 7 February 2020.

Throughout the last months, I have been in close contact with the President of the General Assembly and his Office, as well as the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and Spain, as co-facilitators of the seventh biennial review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, to understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the review process, and the feasibility of holding the second counter-terrorism week as originally planned for the end of June – beginning of July this year.

Following yesterday's decision of the General Assembly to postpone the review to its 75th session, not later than June next year, I have decided, in consultation with the Secretary-General, to postpone in tandem the whole counter-terrorism week, including the first Global

Congress of Victims of Terrorism and the Second High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States.

We think that this is the best course of action as the current circumstances.

We will determine the new dates for the second counter-terrorism week during the 75th session of the General Assembly in close consultation with the President of the General Assembly and Member States.

I would like to commend the President of the General Assembly for his leadership in these difficult times, and the Permanent Representatives of Egypt and Spain – H.E. Ambassador Edrees and H.E. Ambassador Santos Maraver – for the instrumental role they have been playing as co-facilitators thus far.

Terrorists remain active despite the pandemic—and so should we. I have therefore decided to organize a scaled-down, virtual counter-terrorism week from 6 to 10 July this year, under the overarching theme of “Strategic and Practical Challenges of Countering Terrorism in a Global Pandemic Environment”.

Again, this will be an important event allowing us to listen to your priorities.

The event will bring together Member States, Counter-Terrorism Compact entities, civil society and private sector experts to exchange ideas on existing as well as new and emerging counter-terrorism priorities in the COVID-19 environment.

You will receive today the invitations to participate in this Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week. I hope that there will be a high level of participation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also forced us to revisit the arrangements and plans we had made to continue our series of regional high-level counter-terrorism conferences.

Regrettably, the conference for CARICOM countries in Trinidad and Tobago which was scheduled for March had to be postponed. Likewise, together with Member States which have expressed interest to partner with UNOCT in organizing regional conferences, including Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Viet Nam, we are exploring new dates in 2021.

Second, let me highlight some progress in strengthening our partnerships and the delivery of capacity building assistance with Counter-Terrorism Compact entities.

My Office continues to work closely with CTED in line with the Security Council resolution 2395. Just yesterday, I had a tripartite meeting with Assistant-Secretary General Coninx and H.E. Ambassador Kabtani, Permanent Representative of Tunisia, as Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Earlier in February, I briefed the Committee on the steady progress we are making to enhance and consolidate our cooperation, including through the systematic consultation of CTED in the design and development of our technical assistance.

For instance, CTED has been closely involved in the development of a Global Framework led by UNOCT for coordinated United Nations support to requesting Member States on ISIL-associated individuals returned from Syria and Iraq. This is a top priority for the Secretary-General and for the Counter-Terrorism Compact.

I was delighted to conduct a high-level joint visit to Indonesia and the Philippines in March with Assistant Secretary-General Coninx. In Indonesia, we were also joined by Mr. Edmund Fitton-Brown, Coordinator of the ISIL and Al-Qaida Monitoring Team. This afternoon, ASG Coninx and I will jointly brief the CTC on the outcome of these visits.

In April, I met with UNDP's Administrator, Mr. Achim Steiner, to endorse a joint strategic plan of action to boost our collaboration over the next two years on preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism. This will help us increase our impact on the ground.

With our partners from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), we concluded an agreement to jointly implement a project focusing on preventing and combating the illicit trafficking of small-arms and light weapons and their illicit supply to terrorists in Central Asia.

Last week, we celebrated the first anniversary of the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme led by my Office, in partnership with CTED, UNODC, OICT, ICAO, and INTERPOL. To date, 36 Member States are formally participating in the programme and 40 more have expressed interest in benefitting once capacity allows. We are also exploring possible collaboration with the International Maritime Organization.

Supporting Victims of Terrorism remains a top priority and it is important that we keep the momentum. Working together with the Group of Friends, we will ensure that the topic remains high on the agenda, including during the virtual counter-terrorism week.

I would also like to draw your attention to the recent publication of the Secretary-General's report— prepared by my Office—on the progress made by the United Nations system in supporting Member States in assisting victims of terrorism, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 73/305.

Let me also highlight that in the spirit of strengthening our partnerships, and promoting a 'One-UN approach', I have been inviting the heads of Counter-Terrorism Compact entities to participate in UNOCT's townhall meetings over the past six weeks.

I am grateful to High-Commissioner Bachelet, ASG Coninx, Mr. Fitton-Brown and others for their briefings.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

With every crisis come opportunities. While we work to understand and mitigate negative consequences, it is critical that we also seize the opportunity provided by the pandemic to rethink and adjust our methodologies and business models, to not only be able to continue delivering on our mandate, but to do it better and more efficiently.

We have already taken a number of measures in this regard, including the use of e-learning tools. Just over the past couple of weeks, our United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre has organized online trainings on countering the financing of terrorism and violent extremist prisoners, among other initiatives.

My Deputy, Mr. Raffi Gregorian, will brief you more on this shortly.

I would like to highlight the launch of the online Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform on 29 March. It is already helping connect Compact entities and Member States, and facilitating online collaboration. I would like to thank those Member States which have already nominated their focal points for this platform-69 so far- and encourage all others to do so to benefit from this digital gateway to the counter-terrorism work of the United Nations.

I would like to sincerely thank our existing donors for their support and flexibility in these difficult times, and our new donors, who have stepped forward at a critical moment over the past couple of months.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by stressing the importance of remaining vigilant to the continued threat of terrorism during these pressing times, maintaining our unity and solidarity,

and continuing to be guided by all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

One of the key words we have consistently heard over the past weeks, as we work towards comprehensive recovery from COVID-19, is resilience. Resilience was also the theme we proposed for the second counter-terrorism week.

Building resilient societies, through sustaining peace, sustainable development, and the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights is the only way forward. It is impossible without participation of civil society, private sector, women and youth. I encourage Member States to think how countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism can be better integrated in their efforts to build resilient societies in a post COVID-19 world.

UNOCT and the United Nations System stand ready to partner and work with you.

Thank you for your attention.