



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Deputy Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism at the Second 2021 Quarterly Briefing to Member States

19 May 2021

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the second quarterly briefing to Member States this year.

I am pleased to be joined here today by H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Al-Hassan, the Permanent Representative of Oman, and H.E. Ambassador Agustín Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations in their capacities as the co-Facilitators of the on-going Seventh Review of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and would like to thank them for their availability.

Their briefing on the status of the Strategy review will be especially helpful for both the MS and the UN Global CT Compact entities present here today.

I also welcome other senior United Nations officials and colleagues who are joining me for today's briefing.

In USG Voronkov's last briefing, he highlighted that ISIL and Al-Qaida continue to exploit local grievances to expand their influence and carry out attacks through their regional franchises and affiliates.

This was echoed by Member States in February during the USG's briefing to the Security Council on the ISIL report. They expressed concern about the alarming evolution of the terrorism threat, particularly in conflict zones and vulnerable regions, notably in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Sahel region, the Lake Chad Basin, as well as in some parts of Southern and Central Africa.

Member States have also expressed concern that the easing of travel and public gatherings in the coming months could cause a bottle up and release effect leading to a spike in inspired attacks in non-conflict zones following the surge in online propaganda during the pandemic.

We are fortunate today to have Edmund Fitton-Brown to brief us later in the programme on the latest trends

Since the last briefing, the update report of the Secretary-General on the GCTS was issued on 29 January.

In his report, the Secretary-General presented a seven-point vision to counter terrorism as the international community emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

They include the need (i) for a reinvigorated multilateral response, (ii) to break the cycle of terrorist violence, (iii) to increase support for victims of terrorism, (iv) to build forward better for resilient societies, (v) to embed human rights and gender equality in our approach, (vi) to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not prevent the effective delivery of humanitarian aid to populations in need, and (vii) to rise to the challenges and opportunities brought by new technologies

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Today, we will address some of those concerns, but I would also like to update you on the status of the preparations for the second Counter-Terrorism week, and our partnerships and capacity-building efforts.

The second United Nations Counter-Terrorism week will kick-off with a Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly and the adoption and debate of the seventh United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review resolution on 21-22 June.

In this regard, I would like to commend Ambassadors Al-Hassan and Santos Maraver for their deft leadership of the review process.

The Secretary-General will convene the High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States on 28-30 June under the overarching theme of *“Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies: Addressing the Challenges of the New Decade.”*

The conference, about which Mr. Shah will brief you later in the programme, will provide a unique opportunity to address the complex and transnational terrorism threat in the context of transformative technologies. The conference will provide a platform to exchange information, experiences and explore further strengthen international cooperation.

UNOCT is coordinating 28 virtual side events being organized by Member States together with UN entities and CSOs. Ms. Ezzarqui will update you the planning efforts in a short while.

We have moved the Global Congress of Victims to the end of the year to allow crucial in-person attendance, in line with the decision taken by the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism. The International Day of Tribute will still take place in August.

Let me now highlight some progress in strengthening our partnerships and the delivery of capacity building assistance.

First, my Office has continued to strengthen counter-terrorism coordination under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact umbrella.

UNOCT's catalytic funding has resulted in 18 projects on priority and emerging issues, of which 7 have been completed and 11 others are ongoing. The Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform now connects 859 focal point from 131 Member States, the European Union, and the 43 Counter-Terrorism Compact entities.

In February, the Compact Working Group on Gender released the outcome report on the Global Digital Consultation on "Voices and perspectives of civil society on the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and counter-terrorism," organized by UN Women last year with UNOCT funding.

Next week, the Kingdom of Spain and UNOCT will co-organize a Virtual Dialogue with Human Rights and Civil Society Partners on Building a Better Paradigm to Prevent and Counter-Terrorism. This event will help build the momentum towards the postponed, in-person, high-level conference on human rights and civil society engagement in Malaga in early 2022.

Third, under the United Nations Global Framework for All-of-UN Support on Individuals Returned from Syria and Iraq, UNOCT is finalizing a joint scoping exercise in Iraq and launching support for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan later this year.

I am pleased to note that Global Framework entities are finalizing the risk management system and setting up the Global Framework Pooled Funds with the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.

I would like to express my gratitude to the current donors of the Global Framework, namely, the European Union, the United States and the Netherlands, and appeal to all our partners to support this critical initiative.

Fourth, we have made substantial progress in situating programme support presences that allow for the delivery of impactful and cost-effective programming, in closer proximity to and at the request of Member State partners and other beneficiaries.

In that regard, let me reiterate our appreciation to the governments of Hungary, Kenya, Morocco and Qatar for their generous support and hospitality.

Meanwhile, we are continuing to strengthen our engagement with the United Nations Resident Coordinators and Country Teams.

Fifth, to guide our work following the GA's review of the GCTS, UNOCT is developing its strategic plan while the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre finalizes its new Strategic Programme Framework, both of which are synchronized with each other as well as the management response to last year's KPMG evaluation of UNCCT and OIOS's evaluation from 2018.

You will hear more from Dr. Khan and Mr. Miedico in a moment about our capacity-building activities this past quarter, during which UNOCT provided training to a total of 1,061 individuals, organized 16 workshops, and held 19 expert meetings.

Earlier this month, UNOCT re-deployed its programme officer from Mauritania to Burkina Faso, where he is helping coordinate a \$10 million interagency programme to assist the government in grappling with the severe terrorist threat there.

We are looking towards the East African Region, where we are poised to finally open as part of the UN Office in Nairobi (UNON) a regional programme office – an outcome of the 2019 regional High-Level Conference on Africa opened by the Secretary-General and the President of Kenya. When it opens in the next couple of months, the office will implement regional aspects of several of our global programmes.

In Sudan, UNOCT-UNCCT has contributed to a European Union funded project to help the country reintegrate itself into the international community, starting with support for its financial system under the UNCCT Programme on Countering the Financing of Terrorism.

And lastly, UNOCT/UNCCT continues to support the rights and needs of victims through the newly expanded Victims of Terrorism Support Programme, based on its four key areas, namely: solidarity, outreach and advocacy; policy coordination; technical assistance; and communication and visibility.

Regular budget and grant-making authority

Our efforts and the progress reported would not have been possible without the continuing support of some Member States and other partners. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all our donors, notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar whose combined contributions accounted for 76 per cent of UNOCT's budget last year; and especially grateful to the EU, U.S. and the Netherlands.

By 2023, the funding provided by the State of Qatar for many of our core positions will expire, and the funds provided by Saudi Arabia for UNCCT are expected to be exhausted next year.

As I briefed you today, since its establishment, the UNOCT has had only eight regular budget posts. We still have no dedicated funding for human rights, gender or monitoring and evaluation functions. We have managed to pull together minimal funding from other sources to have skeletal staff for these purposes.

I, therefore, hope that Member States will positively consider the proposal to put UNOCT's regular budget resources in better balance with its mandated leadership, policy, and coordination functions.

With those few words, it is my pleasure to now give the floor to their Excellencies, Ambassador Al-Hassan, and Ambassador Santos, for their remarks.

You have the floor, Ambassador al-Hassan.

Thank you.