

The United Nations holds two workshops with Burkina Faso on the use of new technologies to counter terrorism

Ouagadougou, New York, 27 May 2021 – From 24 to 26 May, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), held two national-level capacity-building workshops under the project on ‘Strengthening the capacities of officials from Burkina Faso on the use of digital forensics and cybersecurity technologies to counter terrorism in the COVID-19 era’. This project is implemented as a part of the UNOCT/UNCCT Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Cybersecurity and New Technologies and funded by the Government of Germany.

The protection of critical infrastructures against terrorist cyber-attacks

The first workshop, held on 24 and 25 of May, focused on the protection of critical infrastructures against terrorist cyber-attacks. It was organized in close collaboration with the National Agency of Information Systems Security (ANSSI) of Burkina Faso with support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Fifty experts with cybersecurity responsibilities within the government, the private sector and academia discussed use of new technologies by terrorists, the protection of critical infrastructure and vulnerable targets, as well as the importance of regional and national strategies to strengthen resilience of critical infrastructure from terrorist cyber-attacks. They also emphasized the role of national Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs) in protecting national critical infrastructures.

Mr. Kiendrebeogo P. Martin, Cybersecurity Director of ANSSI, stressed that "*the collaboration with the UNOCT/UNCCT is an opportunity for Burkina Faso in the development of a holistic approach for the governance of information systems security, especially within the framework of the protection of critical national infrastructures.*"

The responsible use and sharing of biometric data to counter terrorism

On 26 May, UNOCT/UNCCT delivered a second workshop on the responsible use and sharing of biometric data to counter terrorism in collaboration with the European Association on Biometrics (EAB).

This workshop contributed to raising awareness among selected participants from the Ministry of Security, the National Police and the National Gendarmerie as well as the Customs and Permanent Secretariat of the Border on the *United Nations Compendium of recommended practices on the responsible use and sharing of biometrics, including risks assessment procedures.*

Developing on how innovation can enhance national efforts to counter terrorism, the Head of the UNNCT Border Security and Management Unit and Mr. Badreddine El Harti, United Nations Special Adviser to the President of Burkina Faso, shared their experience and views on the benefits and challenges regarding the

responsible use of biometrics for border security. A Representative on behalf of the **Secretary General of the Ministry of Security** highlighted that *“The serious and growing threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) returning to their countries of origin or nationality, or moving to third countries, is a complex phenomenon that obliges us to reconsider existing strategies for preventing terrorism. It is therefore even more important that we, through the cooperation with UNOCT on the responsible use and sharing of Biometrics, offer effective and dynamic responses to countering terrorism, preventing and detecting terrorist travel, and disrupt the organized crime networks that facilitate it.”*

The second part of the workshop was moderated by two representatives of the EAB who emphasized the technological challenges in ensuring compliance with data protection and human rights while processing biometric data. They provided an overview of effective solutions to handle sensitive information safely at national and international level. The speakers stressed the role of inter-agency cooperation at the national and regional levels in support of international efforts to ensure early identification of known or suspected terrorists and prevent their travel.

The UNOCT/UNCCT and the Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Cybersecurity and New Technologies

The UNOCT/UNCCT Global Cybersecurity and New Technologies programme was launched in 2020 to support Member States, International and Regional organizations as well as United Nations entities in their efforts to raise awareness on terrorist cyber-threats and enhance the technical capacities required to prevent, mitigate and respond to the misuse of technologies - like the Internet, encryption and Artificial Intelligence (AI) - by terrorist and violent extremist groups. The programme also intends to strengthen the capacities of Member States to counter and investigate terrorist activities through the gathering of digital forensic evidence and other applications of emerging technologies. This programme is funded through the generous contributions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Government of Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), was established in June 2017 to provide leadership on the implementation of General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates, to enhance coordination and coherence through the Global Counter-Terrorism Compact, and to strengthen the delivery of the United Nations counter-terrorism capacity building assistance to Member States, through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT).