



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

**Thirteenth “Report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL
(Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United
Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat”**

19 August 2021

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,**

I would like to start by expressing my sincere condolences to the governments and people of all Member States which have recently suffered from any form or manifestation of terrorism. My heartfelt thoughts and sympathies go to the survivors and the families of the victims.

Tomorrow we will commemorate the fourth International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, with the participation of the Secretary-General. Let us work every day to prevent and alleviate the pain and suffering that terrorism causes.

I thank the Security Council for the opportunity to present the thirteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da’esh to international peace and security, and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering this threat, as mandated by Security Council resolution 2368 (2017).

I am pleased that Assistant-Secretary-General Michèle Coninx is joining me today to present this report, which our offices prepared jointly with the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, led by Mr. Edmund Fitton-Brown.

I take this opportunity to salute the excellent work of the Monitoring Team, which recently produced its own twenty-eighth report on the threat posed by Da’esh and Al-Qaida.

Mr. President,

We all are witnessing the rapidly evolving situation in Afghanistan which could have far reaching implications for peace and security around the world. It is therefore welcome that Dr. Davood Moradian will also brief the Security Council today.

I would like to echo the Secretary-General's appeal to the Security Council earlier this week to use all tools at its disposal to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a platform or safe haven for terrorism. Let us remember in this regard that several members of the Taliban remain designated terrorists according to the Security Council resolution 1988 sanctions regime. I also note the concerns expressed by some Security Council Members with regards to the release of prisoners affiliated to Al-Qaida and Da'esh.

Despite the latest developments in Afghanistan, the Secretary-General's 13th report on Da'esh remains valid. Its emphasis on the interplay between armed conflict, state fragility and terrorism, and Afghanistan is no exception. The report also notes that Da'esh has expanded its presence in Afghanistan. We will need to ensure that Afghanistan is never again used as launching pad for global terrorism.

Globally, the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security during the period under consideration has remained significant and steady over the past six months, raising serious international concerns.

Da'esh has continued to exploit the disruption, grievances and development setbacks caused by the pandemic to regroup, recruit new followers and intensify its activities both online and on the ground.

Its core in Iraq and Syria has still access to significant, hidden financial reserves, estimated between 25 and 50 million American dollars.

Da'esh has decentralized its governance further and the additional autonomy, capacity, and confidence gained by its regional affiliates, could provide the group new options, including to orchestrate international attacks, and shape the future global impact of Da'esh.

COVID-19 related lockdowns in many areas were more comprehensive in early 2021 than in 2020, but it is conceivable that attacks have been planned for when restrictions ease. There is an increased, near-term threat of attacks by lone actors or small groups inspired and possibly directed remotely by Da'esh, including online.

Only through cooperative measures between and within countries, including civil society and the private sector, can we counter the terrorist threat online. I welcome in this regard the first-ever high-level debate held last month by this Council on cybersecurity, as well as initiatives taken at the regional level.

Mr. President,

Da'esh remains focused on reconstituting its capabilities in Iraq and Syria, organized in small cells hiding in desert and rural areas that wage an insurgency against security forces, while they move across the border between the two countries to avoid capture.

However, it is the lack of a comprehensive solution to the situation of thousands of individuals with alleged links to Da'esh who remain stranded in Iraq and Syria that could

shape the future terrorist threat landscape over the medium to long term, not just locally but globally.

The conditions in detention facilities and displacement camps in northeast Syria have further deteriorated, especially in Al-Hawl camp. Several instances of escapes, terrorist radicalization, fund-raising, arms-smuggling, training and incitement continue to be reported, as well as killings and enforced disappearances.

Thousands of children caught in this limbo through no fault of their own continue to have their rights abused and violated on a daily basis.

I welcome the efforts of Member States that have repatriated their citizens since my last briefing to this Council in February. But the pace is too slow considering the scale of this humanitarian, human rights and strategic security priority, which only grows more complex as time passes.

And I think because of this development in Afghanistan, it could create even more dangerous environment in these camps with unpredictable consequences.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call upon Member States for the voluntary repatriation of all concerned individuals, with particular focus on children, in line with international law and with the consent of relevant governments.

Next month, we will formally launch the Global Framework that my Office coordinates with UNICEF to facilitate all-of-UN support to requesting Member States on the protection, voluntary repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration of individuals with suspected links to United Nations- designated terrorist groups returning from Iraq and Syria.

We have already begun employing this framework mechanism in support of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and a scoping exercise has been undertaken to support Iraq.

Mr. President,

The report of the Secretary-General describes that the most alarming development over the past six months has been the spread of Da'esh in Africa, with spillover from Mali into Burkina Faso and Niger, incursions from Nigeria into Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and from Mozambique into Tanzania.

A global response is urgently needed to support the efforts of African countries and regional organizations to counter terrorism and address its interplay with conflict, organized crime, governance and development gaps, as underscored by a wide range of Member States during the second Counter-Terrorism Week that we held from 28th to 30th of June this year in New York.

Da'esh's affiliate in the "Greater Sahara" has killed several hundred civilians since the beginning of the year in large-scale attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger. Its so-called "West Africa Province" will likely gain from the weakening of Boko Haram. The situation in the wider region could be aggravated by the relocation of terrorists and other foreign fighters from Libya.

The expansion of Da'esh in Central Africa, and especially in northern Mozambique, could have far-reaching implications for peace and security in the region and need to be addressed through a coherent, regional approach as a matter of priority – as the group's affiliates may seek to exploit intercommunal disputes and illicit trafficking activities.

In Europe, the threat from Da'esh has continued to be suppressed by pandemic-related restrictions. The threat of terrorist attacks by lone actors radicalized and incited online, especially vulnerable youth, remains the primary concern along with terrorist radicalization in prison.

Mr. President,

Assistant Secretary-General Coninx will brief you shortly on the support provided over the past months by the United Nations system to Member States in addressing the threat posed by Da'esh.

My Office has continued to work closely with all our partners to ensure business continuity during the pandemic and advance the implementation of our global programmes and projects tailored to address the needs of Member States.

These efforts are supported through our presence in the field, as requested by Member States, including our Programme Office for Counter-Terrorism and Training in Rabat and the Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Doha, which we launched in June in partnership with Morocco and Qatar respectively.

I would like to briefly highlight a few examples:

Our Global Programme on Detecting, Preventing and Countering the Financing of Terrorism in response to Security Council resolution 2462 (2019) leads on a joint initiative with the Global Counterterrorism Forum to identify and disseminate good practices to effectively counter terrorism financing while safeguarding civic space.

The United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme led by my Office to help Member States establish Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records systems, in line with Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017), and 2482 (2019), now counts 43 beneficiaries. The Programme held three virtual assessments for Djibouti, Mongolia and South Africa, and interactive online trainings for Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Member States of the Southern African Development Community.

We also completed a series of virtual study visits to Belgium, Colombia, Norway, the Russian Federation and Spain for the beneficiaries of our Global Programme on National-level Interagency Coordination Mechanisms or “fusion cells” and launched in January a new Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets.

Mr. President,

2021 is a year of milestones in the international fight against terrorism. The time could not be better for Member States to recommit themselves to multilateral action against terrorism, under the auspices of the United Nations.

Twenty years ago, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks by Al-Qaida, the Security Council provided momentous leadership and guidance with the adoption of its landmark resolution 1373 and the establishment of its Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Today, we face transnational terrorist threats like Da’esh and Al-Qaida that are enduring and able to adapt to new technologies, but also expanding to include individuals and groups that commit terrorist attacks connected to xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance.

Unity and leadership from the Security Council remains as critical today as in 2001 to confront terrorism in a sustained, collective, effective, and principled manner that upholds the rule of law, human rights, gender equality, and safeguards humanitarian action.

This year also marks the fifteenth anniversary of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in my Office.

I was highly encouraged therefore by the success of our second counter-terrorism week in June, during which Member States actively engaged in the Second High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies convened by the Secretary-General— and the consensus, consensus adoption by the General Assembly of a comprehensive and forward-looking resolution for the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

This bodes well for our collective efforts, and bad for Da’esh and other terrorists.

The United Nations system, through the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, stands ready to support you and all Member States.

I look forward to the guidance from this Council as we transition into a new decade for counter-terrorism.

Thank you, Mr. President.