



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian
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United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)
Blue Sky VI “An Independent Analysis of UN Counterterrorism Efforts”**

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Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me join Assistant Secretary-General Gherman to acknowledge the role of the co-facilitators in the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

I would like to thank the Global Center on Cooperative Security for inviting me to speak at the launch of the Sixth Blue Sky report as part of such a prestigious panel.

Today’s event could not be more timely.

Member States are in the third and final round of negotiations of the eighth review of the Strategy – the Strategy for which they have the primary responsibility to implement.

And while Member States have been able to make some gains in the fight against terrorism, it still remains a major threat to international peace and security.

The threat posed by terrorist groups such as Da’esh, Al-Qaida and their affiliates based in and around conflict zones, particularly in Africa, have actually increased in some instances while in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan terrorists actually enjoy far more freedom than do women and girls.

Terrorists remain agile, adapting to new circumstances and utilizing technologies such as cryptocurrencies and unmanned aerial systems for terrorist purposes.

The ideologies driving terrorism are also diversifying, with many hateful ideologies resurging as part of the rise of terrorist attacks motivated by xenophobia, racism, and other forms of

intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief. These acts of terrorism pose an increasing danger on a worldwide scale, requiring united and comprehensive responses.

This bleak picture should not mask the important efforts that have been made to counter terrorism and violent extremism, institutionally and globally. The latest Blue Sky report highlights many such efforts, while providing recommendations to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

And speaking of such efforts, I am delighted to share that the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, set up by the Secretary-General in 2018 and led by UNOCT, has officially welcomed the International Monetary Fund as an observer, becoming its 46th entity.

The Compact is the largest coordination framework at the United Nations and its continued growth can be attributed to its comprehensive approach facilitated by its eight thematic working groups, dedicated online platform and joint programming. These initiatives foster effective coordination, while shaping a coherent counter-terrorism agenda within the UN system.

But as highlighted in the Blue Sky Report, we believe that the Compact can and should further leverage its members' comparative advantages. UNOCT will continue to enhance the Compact's effectiveness, including by making it a comprehensive platform for Member States to access information on UN counter-terrorism initiatives and facilitating collaboration with Compact entities.

We will also enhance the Compact's digital platform, featuring a dedicated page for Member States' national counter-terrorism policies, priorities, good practices, and regional cooperation frameworks. This will promote understanding of country and regional needs and facilitate the exchange of information, relevant practices and lessons learned.

We will of course continue to prioritize an inclusive approach by engaging with civil society organizations and other stakeholders to help inform and shape the development of policies and programmes.

Finally, it is essential for UN entities and Member States to collaborate and ensure that forthcoming initiatives within the Compact foster cooperation rather than generate competition among UN entities, acknowledging the lessons learned in this regard. We are pleased to see this reflected in the Blue Sky report, as the Secretary-General has urged greater horizontal coordination.

In my personal opinion, this means we need to look at how to make sure the UN's counter-terrorism approaches are appropriately reflected in the analysis and work of UN country teams led by the resident coordinator system, particularly in settings where a Member State is confronted with a terrorist insurgency that requires a whole-of-society response.

The Compact's Resource Mobilization, Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group of the Counter-Terrorism Compact is also working to launch a UN Joint Appeal for Counter-Terrorism in Africa, which is now considered to be the epicenter of terrorism today and why UNOCT and Nigeria will organize an African counter-terrorism summit early next year.

The joint appeal, which we will launch during Counter-Terrorism Week, consists of 10 joint initiatives by Compact entities that have been carefully selected based on their proven track record and potential of achieving transformative and impactful results, strategic value proposition of multiple entities working together, responsiveness to CTED recommendations, value-for-money, high innovation potential and a strong focus on the integration of human rights and gender considerations.

Speaking of value for money, let me speak briefly about funding for UNOCT. First, an important clarification. The executive summary of the Blue Sky report says that UNOCT—quote: “is now supported by more than \$340 million in voluntary contributions to the UN Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism”—unquote. For those who read the entire report, you'll know this figure combines all previous contributions since the creation of the trust fund more than 12 years ago. To put it in perspective, that total is less than the what the State Department's Counter-Terrorism Bureau budget was *for one year* when I worked there. And while UNOCT's *projected* budget for 2023 may have been \$67.6 million, our actual released budget is \$54.2 million.

That is why the General Assembly's approval of the Secretary-General's proposal to actually convert 49 posts, the first 25 of which this year, of UNOCT XB-funded positions to the regular budget was so important. The Fifth Committee and the GA recognized that having one donor support mandated functions related to policy, leadership, coordination, and other mandated functions was unsustainable, as prior to this we were almost 97% funded by voluntary contributions and had only 8 regular budget posts, including the USG's.

Our hope is that the Fifth Committee will approve the rest of the SG's proposal of a second tranche of 24 positions, which will then give us about the same number of RB-funded posts as CTED has and confirm a business model where XB funds are used for capacity-building and technical assistance programmes rather than policy and coordination. This will help the Office become increasingly integrated into UN frameworks, like the New Agenda for Peace.

As one of the four co-leads preparing the policy brief on a New Agenda for Peace, UNOCT has ensured that it reflects the complexities around terrorism and the need to further integrate our counter-terrorism work across the UN peace and security pillar.

The February 2023 Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy emphasizes the significance of meaningfully involving civil society in efforts aimed at preventing and countering terrorism.

We believe that while some progress has been made in adopting a comprehensive approach that includes all sectors of society, there is still work to be done to ensure civil society's regular and safe engagement with the UN system.

UNOCT continues to work with civil society partners to explore ways to implement its Civil Society Engagement Strategy, including recommendations articulated in the Malaga Outcome Document, alongside its ongoing engagements, such as the periodic Civil Society Roundtables which I moderate to facilitate regular exchange between civil society and UNOCT.

In addition, I'm pleased to announce that the Malaga Outcome Document of the High-Level International Conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism is now available on UNOCT's website.

To further facilitate civil society engagement, UNOCT continues to seek grant-making authority to improve cost-efficiency and allow strengthened partnership with civil society. We are working with relevant UN offices to secure necessary approvals.

The status quo is both unnecessarily expensive, time-consuming and obliges us to have CSOs use the UN procurement bidding system, something of which most CSOs are not equipped to do. That means we have transfer funds to them through another UN entity that does have grant authority.

For our part, UNOCT already has established a set of robust internal controls, and these could be readily expanded to ensure that grants are properly evaluated, awarded, and tracked in accordance with UN regulations and rules.

The full integration of the rule of law, human rights and gender equality in UN counter-terrorism efforts are paramount and will require appropriate internal technical capacity as necessary preconditions to truly materialize, as described in the Secretary-General's report. Considerable progress has been made in incorporating human rights and gender considerations in preventing and countering terrorism, including through the Compact's dedicated Working Group on Protecting and Promoting Human Rights, the Rule of Law, and Supporting Victims of Terrorism, chaired by OHCHR, with UNOCT as vice-Chair, as well as through the Working Group on Adopting a Gender-Sensitive Approach to Preventing and Countering Terrorism, chaired by UN Women with CTED as vice-Chair.

In line with the recommendations of the Blue Sky Report, the UN needs more dedicated positions across the system, including through the provision of sustained funding. It's all well and good for Member States to pound the table about the importance of human rights and gender, but resources need to follow the rhetoric.

For our part, UNOCT established a dedicated Human Rights and Gender Section in 2022. The Section, which the GA formally approved at the end of last year.

UNOCT understands the added value of a standardized monitoring and evaluation approach across Compact entities to assess the implementation of the Strategy, as recommended in the Blue Sky Report, with a focus on the integration of the rule of law, human rights, and gender considerations into counter-terrorism efforts.

Finally, UNOCT is committed to ongoing collaboration with Member States, international and regional organizations, Compact entities, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Together, we strive to ensure that comprehensive and multilateral approaches to counter-terrorism are both effective and in line with international law, particularly international humanitarian, and human rights law.

Thank you very much.