



Co-chairs Summary

Joint United Nations - Hungary Regional Conference for Central Europe on Prevention of Radicalization to Terrorism: Regional Policy Responses and Risk Mitigation

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

Budapest, 8 November 2019

Your Excellency, Mr. Sandor Pinter, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of Hungary,

Your Excellency, Mr. Gilles de Kerchove, European Union Counter-Terrorism Coordinator,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Hungary for its warm and gracious hospitality.

I would also like to thank their Excellencies, Mr. Peter Szijjarto, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary; Mr. Yerlan Turgumbayev, Minister of Internal Affairs, Kazakhstan; Mr. Igor Crnadak, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Mr. Gilles de Kerchove, European Union Counter-Terrorism Coordinator; Senator Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; Dr. György Bakondi, Chief Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of Hungary; Ambassador Frederika Ornbrant, Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden; Ambassador Katalina AnnaMaria Bogyay, Permanent representative of Hungary to the United Nations; and Mr. Gabriele Cascone, Head of the Counter-Terrorism Section, NATO; and, to all those who have contributed to the success of this Conference through their leadership, participation and contributions.

I would also like to thank our donors and partner states who have been providing crucial support for our counter-terrorism activities, including organisation of this High-Level Conference in Budapest.

Excellencies,

This regional conference is the fifth in a series of Regional Conferences that UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) has organised as part of a broader initiative to give new impetus to multilateral cooperation and to address the evolving threat of terrorism.

These regional conferences are closely aligned with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, and among others, aim to help promote national and regional ownership of the UN Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Outcomes of these conferences will feed into the Second High-Level Counter-Terrorism week - 29 June to 2 July 2020.

This conference has brought together over 204 representatives from 61 Member States, and a number of international and regional as well as civil society organisations.

During the two days of discussions, participants agreed that the threat from Da'esh, Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups remains widespread and diverse.

This includes threat from returning foreign terrorist fighters, frustrated travellers, right wing extremists and individuals radicalized online, as the spread of terrorist narratives in cyberspace remains pervasive.

Our discussions during the conference generated many innovative ideas and practical actions not only for this region, but at the global level.

As there will not be a negotiated outcome of this conference, allow me to set out some key conclusions and a vision for the way forward, on behalf of the two Co-chairs.

First, all sessions of the conference underlined the need to further strengthen international and regional cooperation, including sharing of good practices and lessons learned to prevent radicalization.

We all have a role to play to help promote regional cooperation, and I commend the comprehensive work of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU) and other regional organizations in this regard.

UNOCT is helping Member States develop state of the art travel, aviation and border security programmes which can only succeed in an environment of international and regional cooperation.

Our Countering Terrorist Travel Programme is one of the flagship endeavors to assist requesting Member States to meet their obligations under relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

The establishment of UNOCT and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact provides a clear framework and a solid platform for our joint work with Member States.

We are also creating a United Nations Counter-Terrorism Coordination Portal to improve the sharing of information, resources and expertise among Member States and the UN entities.

As part of this initiative, we will produce a list of focal points working on counter-terrorism issues to help promote cooperation between Member States and the UN Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities.

The UN Office of Counter-Terrorism is also launching a programme on strengthening law enforcement agencies' capacity in Africa to prevent and counter terrorism through the establishment of inter-agency fusion centers. As such, these centers will create or enhance existing counter-terrorism coordination and information sharing capabilities of national agencies.

Second, this conference has reinforced the need to fully address the conditions that fuel the lure of terrorism, especially at the grassroots level.

As we heard yesterday, holistic, inclusive and evidence-based preventive steps are critical to understanding and addressing, in a carefully calibrated and contextualized manner, the drivers that push and pull individuals to become radicalized and join terrorist groups. These drivers include incitement, inequality, marginalization and discrimination.

In Session I, we heard in particular about creative ways to address terrorist propaganda.

Governments, the private sector and civil society must work more closely together to both remove online terrorist content and to reach vulnerable and susceptible youth with alternative narratives.

This includes enhanced public-private partnerships to prevent the timely removal of terrorist content online.

Third, our discussions have confirmed that acute concerns remain about the challenges posed by foreign terrorist fighters, returnees and relocators.

For many European Member States, the risk posed by frustrated travellers and the risk of recidivism among individuals imprisoned on terrorism charges, who are about to be released from custody, are also of great concern.

As we heard in session two yesterday, the issue of foreign terrorist fighters and their family members detained or stranded in Syria and Iraq presents states with complex legal, security and operational challenges.

Urgent attention and political leadership is needed on these issues to ensure adequate protection and support of vulnerable individuals, and to ensure accountability for serious crimes, including terrorism, war crimes, crimes against humanity and gender-related crimes.

In this context, the UN Secretary-General has called for immediate international action to respond to the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation of thousands of women and children, including those from Europe, currently detained in overcrowded and insecure camps in Syria and Iraq.

Member States have primary responsibility for their own nationals, and it is vital that they refrain from any action that renders individuals stateless.

In this regard, UNOCT in collaboration with UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is leading the development of a UN strategy to engage Member States on the repatriation of women and children from Al-Hol camp in Syria.

We must also work together on gathering and sharing battlefield and digital evidence to ensure that suspected foreign terrorist fighters can be adequately prosecuted, in line with due process and fair trial standards, and eventually rehabilitated and reintegrated back into society where possible.

Fourth, “whole-of-society” approaches are the most effective way to prevent and counter terrorism in this region and beyond.

This point was underlined by several speakers in each of the sessions.

In particular, many of you noted that cooperation with civil society and non-governmental organizations at the grassroots level is vital.

I am delighted that civil society organizations have attended this conference and actively participated in the discussions, including four panel presentations.

UNOCT welcomes the active engagement of civil society partners in the Regional Conferences. Cooperation with civil society, NGOs and local stakeholders, at the grassroots level is vital to delivering results on the ground.

The involvement and leadership of women is also vital.

This conference has underlined the crucial role of women in preventing radicalization to terrorism, not just as mothers, but as civil servants, law enforcement officers, political and community leaders and, indeed, as role models and influencers.

Fifth, based on our discussions this morning, we must do more to listen to youth perspectives and engage young people to help shape counter-terrorism strategies.

We heard how young people are our greatest hope in the fight against terrorism.

They are agents of positive change with the power and influence to prevent and oppose the spread of violent extremism among their peers and in their communities.

We need to harness their dynamism and desire for change to effectively build resilience and counter the manipulative messages of terrorists. UNOCT is ready to work with you to do more on this front.

Sixth, we need to increase our support to victims and survivors of terrorism. They manifest resilience in the face of terror. Their stories could play an important role in countering the appeal of terrorism.

I look forward to discussing practical ways to uphold the rights and needs of victims, and provide them with support and empathy at the first Global Congress of Victims in New York on 30 June next year.

Seventh, I listened carefully to your views on how the United Nations can better support Member States in tackling terrorism.

The United Nations must continue to respond to Member States capacity building and technical assistance needs with a view to achieve lasting impact on the ground.

These efforts should be based on thorough analyses of comparative advantage of what Member States can do better on bilateral basis and what the United Nations could do better.

Guided by the principle of national ownership and leadership in countering terrorism, we must continue to strengthen our cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations to ensure seamless and coordinated support to Member States.

The joint efforts of the UN with the OSCE and the EU to prevent and counter terrorism have grown rapidly and reached new heights this year.

UNOCT has signed a UN-EU Framework on Counter-Terrorism to strengthen our cooperation on capacity-building assistance and many other key areas.

Likewise, the partnership between the UN and OSCE has become stronger and more concrete, with a Memorandum of Understanding and plan of action agreed that I have signed with Secretary-General Greminger.

Lastly, we also had an opportunity to discuss the relationship between migration and security.

We understand this is a complex and important issue. Secretary-General Guterres once said, “Managing migration is one of the most urgent and profound tests of international cooperation in our time.”

International community cannot be oblivious of the migration and security dynamics. However, it is also true that migration does not directly contribute to terrorism, which in itself is a complex multidisciplinary phenomenon.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We are at the crossroads of the global fight against terrorism.

Recent developments in Syria and around the world have shown that we can never be complacent about the potential resurgence of Da'esh.

This conference has enabled us to reaffirm our commitment, align our actions and goals, and pursue an inclusive approach, which is crucial to prevent radicalization to terrorism in this region and across the world.

Together, let's build on the momentum achieved in this Conference.

Thank you.