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Countering and Preventing Terrorism in the Age of Transformative Technologies: Addressing the Challenges of the New Decade



operations, including disinformation targeting elections and political systems. Nevertheless, Member States, United Nations entities, and international and regional organizations have made innovative use of modern technologies to gather, use and share information, detect and prevent acts of terrorism, bring perpetrators to justice, and support victims of terrorism.

8. During the First High-Level Conference and subsequent Regional Conferences, participants underlined the importance of preventing the exploitation of information and communication technologies by terrorist groups while expressing concern at the widespread use of the Internet by terrorists to spread their ideologies and coordinate attacks. Member States echoed this during the 2020 Virtual Counter-Terrorism Week. They assessed that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic would likely lead to more diverse terrorist threats, including cyber disruption of critical infrastructure. States deemed the misuse of digital technology and social media to spread terr



11. This session, which is open to Member States only, will feature presentations by heads of counter-terrorism agencies of Member States, representatives of United Nations entities with counter-terrorism mandates, and international, regional and sub-regional organizations. Although the overall rate of terrorist attacks dropped globally from 2015-2020, last year saw an increase in the threat posed by a number of terrorist groups, including ISIL, Al-Qaida and their regional affiliates, in some conflict zones and volatile regions, especially in Africa. Some terrorist and violent extremist groups have taken advantage of the pandemic's upheaval to recruit vulnerable individuals, forge opportunistic alliances with criminal organizations, and exploit intercommunal tensions while maintaining sleeper cells in poorly governed territories. There are concerns about a potential increase in the terrorist threat in non-conflict areas in the coming months in the form of inspired attacks, as a result of the surge in online propaganda during the pandemic, coupled with the anticipated resumption of large-scale international travel and new opportunities to attack crowded 'soft' or 'vulnerable' targets, including touristic venues, places of worship, religious sites, and major sports events, once COVID-19 restrictions on public and social gatherings ease worldwide. Terrorist groups may also regain the capacity to orchestrate international attacks in the coming year.²

12. This thematic session will address the following key questions:

Which new technologies are being exploited by terrorists and how can Member States acting individually or multilaterally prevent such abuses?

How will terrorism evolve over the new decade? What factors and dynamics will shape this evolution?

Which States or regions will be most impacted by terrorism in the new decade?

14. _____ will focus on good practices for using innovative programmes, including behavioural insights and sports, to unite communities and build resilient societies. Participants will discuss challenges and good practices for preventing and countering threats against major sporting events, using sports and their values as a tool to build resilience, especially among youths and prevent violent extremism. They will also discuss challenges and good practices for using insights from behavioural science to identify risk and resilience factors and develop empirically validated interventions to prevent and counter violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism effectively.

15. This break-out session will address the following key questions:

How can behavioural insights improve understanding of the drivers of violent extremism, identify risk and resilience factors, and develop effective counter-terrorism responses?
What risks does a behavioural insights approach to preventing and countering terrorism present? How can those be overcome?

18.

_____ . This session will review existing strategies and tools to ensure systematic, coherent and structured engagement between Member States, United Nations entities, other international and regional organizations, and civil society. Participants will explore new ways to strengthen civil society engagement for preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism, taking into consideration the evolution of the terrorist threat and the challenges and opportunities of the new decade. The importance of this theme is reflected in several General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. In its resolution 72/284, the General Assembly recognizes the role that civil society organizations can play in confronting the challenges of recruitment and radicalization to terrorism, notes the importance of cooperation with civil society in addressing the misuse of technologies by

the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals but complementary and mutually reinforcing and stresses the need to promote and protect the rights of victims of terrorism.

22. The landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) stresses the importance of the role and full involvement of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace and security efforts. Through the fifth and sixth reviews of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the General Assembly underscores the important role of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, and encourages Member States, United Nations entities and international, regional and sub-regional organizations to ensure the participation and leadership of women in efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter terrorism, as well as to consult with women's organizations to inform their counter-terrorism work.

23. Acts of terrorism impact children in multiple ways, with severe consequences.³ According to international law, children, defined as all persons under the age of 18, are considered vulnerable and in need of special protections based only on their age.⁴



29. This break-out session will address the following key questions:

What are some existing practices, challenges, and policy options for strengthening a criminal justice response to counter terrorism in compliance with international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law?

What are the respective roles of different national agencies, international and regional organizations, and the private sector, in collecting, using and sharing, as appropriate, various forms of information or evidence at the national, regional and international levels?

What are the main challenges and good practices for collecting, using and sharing, as appropriate, admissible evidence in cases related to terrorism and other serious international crimes, while complying with international human rights standards, especially when interviewing women and children?

What role can different national agencies, international and regional organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations play in supporting victims and survivors of terrorism through the criminal justice system?

How can new technologies be used to mitigate or overcome challenges related to delayed

What challenges do States face in investigating, prosecuting, and rehabilitating and reintegrating, as appropriate, their repatriated nationals?

What specific issues should States consider when repatriating, prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating, as appropriate, women and children from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic?

What good practices exist to overcome the above challenges?

How can UN entities and other concerned stakeholders further improve their support to requesting Member States to identify, screen, repatriate, prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate, as appropriate, individuals and families from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic?



32. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, the 19 international conventions and protocols to prevent terrorist acts, and regional and bilateral instruments provide a robust international framework to counter terrorism. Since the adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, there have been many examples of cooperation among Member States including through the conclusion of new multilateral, regional and bilateral cooperation agreements. However, much more can and needs to be done to strengthen regional and international counterterrorism cooperation, specifically in response to the misuse of new technologies. In the sixth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Member States encourage “all relevant international, regional and sub-regional organizations and forums involved in the fight against terrorism to cooperate with the United Nations system and Member States in supporting the Strategy and to share best practices (...)”. This session will consider new and existing practical tools and strategies for strengthening international cooperation to counter terrorism.

33. This thematic session will address the following key questions:

What are the main challenges for strengthening bilateral, regional and international counter-terrorism cooperation? How can those challenges be overcome?

How can international and regional organizations and other concerned stakeholders further support requesting Member States to address any persistent legal, policy, practical and operational gaps to address the challenges of the new decade?

What are some of the lessons learned and best practices of Member States in developing national

