

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

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Many children have also travelled across borders with their families, members of which may be affiliated with armed groups, including designated terrorist groups.

We are now facing a problem that is as complex as it is unprecedented. Thousands of children of ISIL fighters and followers remain trapped in Syria and Iraq and are facing a multitude of challenges, including dire humanitarian conditions, with no end in sight.

Those born in areas under the control of armed and designated terrorist groups often lack birth registration or identity documentation and are at risk of statelessness.

In resolution 2396, the Security Council called upon Member States to assess and investigate suspected terrorists, including their children, and to take appropriate action, such as prosecuting, rehabilitating and reintegrating these individuals.

However, some children, who themselves are merely alleged to be associated with these groups, are systematically arrested, detained, prosecuted and even convicted and sentenced to harsh penalties, in contravention of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law.

Last year, in his report on the Effects of Terrorism on the Enjoyment of Human Rights, the Secretary-General Guterres he recruitment of children, regardless of the circumstances and methods employed, constitutes a violation of international law and leads to violence and exploitation. The recognition of child recruits as victims of crime is essential to giving them access to their rights as such, including the right to repatriation and rehabilitation measures.

At the request of the Secretary-General, my Office coordinated an inter-agency effort to develop a set of Reintegration of Women and Children with Links to UN Listed Terrorist Groups.

These Key Principles, which were published in April, provide guidance to the United Nations system in offering practical assistance to Member States.

We also hope that Member States can take them into account when developing their own policies and programmes.

The Key Principles reiterate that all policies and actions affecting children should be firmly the Child, and that children must be seen first and foremost as victims.

Complementary to the Key Principles, my Office developed this Handbook to support Member States in

It provides guidance on relevant international human rights and humanitarian law and standards concerning eight issues in relation to children affected by the foreign-fighter phenomenon:

- First, ensuring child rights while addressing security concerns;
- Second, ensuring the right to nationality;
- Third, preserving family unity;
- Fourth, repatriation;
- Fifth, rehabilitation and reintegration;
- Sixth, juvenile justice;
- Seventh, deprivation of liberty; and,
- last but not least, data collection and exchange.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre within my Office and UNODC are committed to combining our