



United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre

Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office

WORKSHOP

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN ADDRESSING CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO THE SPREAD OF TERRORISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA DEBATE

7-8 APRIL 2014

GREENTREE, MANHASSET, USA

SUMMARY REPORT

A. Introduction

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) organized a workshop on the role of the United Nations in addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the context of the post-2015 development agenda debate on 7-8 April 2014 in Greentree, NY.

UNCCT was established in September 2011 within the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office to promote international counter-terrorism cooperation and support Member States in the implementation of the 2006 United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288). Based at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Centre engages with 31 United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes within the CTITF framework with expertise on a wide spectrum of counter-terrorism related subjects, including the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

The workshop focused on Pillar I of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which calls for addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism (hereafter “conditions conducive”). Pillar I enumerates several such conditions, including “prolonged unresolved conflicts, dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, lack of the rule of law and violations of human rights, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization and lack of good governance.” Under this Pillar, Member States also included a direct link to the Millennium Development Goals by reiterating their determination to ensure the timely and full realization of the development goals and objectives. Member States will review the Global Strategy for the fourth time in June 2014.

The workshop sought to further identify and underscore linkages between the United Nations counter-terrorism work and the Secretary-General's key priorities. Among the Secretary-General's major priorities is the achievement of a universal, inclusive post-2015 development agenda with sustainable development at its core, and cognizant of the nexus between peace and development. The Secretary-General has also called upon the international system, including the United Nations, to embrace a more coherent and effective response to support this agenda. In light of the on-going debate on the Sustainable Development Goals, and the growing focus on peace and governance issues, this workshop looked at how counter-terrorism efforts relate to the development and conditions conducive nexus.

The workshop took place in the shadow of the tragic news that two United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) colleagues had been killed in Somalia.

B. Summary of discussions

The **opening session** highlighted the link between the workshop and the Secretary-General's major priorities. The Secretary-General is cognizant of the nexus between peace and development especially regarding his priority to achieve a universal, inclusive post-2015 development agenda with sustainable development at its core. The Secretary-General has also called upon the international system, including the United Nations, to embrace a more coherent and effective response to support this agenda. In light of the on-going debate on the Sustainable Development Goals, and the growing focus on peace and governance issues, there is a need to look at how counter-terrorism efforts relate to the development and "conditions conducive" nexus.

It was highlighted that terrorist activities continue to be a major threat to development in many countries. Terrorism has also become a major driver of conflict and violence. In the recent past, the Sahel region, for example, has seen a proliferation of terrorist groups as well as heightened terrorist activity, in a manner that erodes state authority and impacts peace, human security and development. The capacity of terrorist groups to recruit and radicalize young men and women both locally and remotely is a growing concern. National governments have stressed the need for a regional approach to combat terrorism, especially in the face of the high mobility of these groups. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel thus has a major work stream devoted to assisting national as well as regional security mechanisms to combat terrorism and cross-border threats.

Speakers emphasized that beyond the Sahel, local authorities and United Nations entities in several countries and regions have, in many cases, understood the linkages between the "conditions conducive" and development, and have implemented holistic and integrated multi-sectoral programming to address security and development challenges.

In addition to the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, concrete examples of multi-sector approaches are the Integrated Assistance for Counter-Terrorism initiative in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, the Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia – the first regional Action Plan of its kind in global efforts to implement the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is now being replicated in other regions including in East Africa – and the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region – the so-called Great Lakes peace accord.

It was also highlighted that the workshop was not designed to push a certain agenda or result. On the contrary, potential challenges to inter-agency cooperation were mentioned as they might pertain to such issues as the complex question of conditionality of aid, how best to ensure conflict-sensitive development and humanitarian assistance and the security of United Nations staff and other personnel in the field.

Participants raised the main questions that they thought the workshop should address:

First, how can the United Nations System support Member States to identify complementarities between the Global Strategy review and the post-2015 development debate? How can post-2015 development goals and objectives moderate conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism? How can the United Nations System assist Member States to improve the outcomes of both processes?

Second, some agencies feel that national and international counter-terrorism norms sometimes undermine the impartiality, both real and perceived, of humanitarian actors. Negative impacts of counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian action have notably included halts or decrease in funding and limitations on financial transactions, planning and programme design not according to needs and suspension of programmes. While none of the laws examined in the Study actually prohibit humanitarian organizations from having contact with groups designated as terrorists, donor counter-terrorism measures have also a "chilling effect", as operational decisions are not made strictly according to needs, but also to minimise organisations' exposure to criminal liability and reputational risks. How can the United Nations System effectively mitigate such concerns?

Third, how can the United Nations System present collaborative programmes and projects without necessarily labelling them as counter-terrorism measures? The United Nations might want to explore, including with donors, how it can plan and design projects in the most effective manner, in order to achieve results and guarantee staff security.

Fourth, and as a provocation: can nearly anything that the United Nations does in the field of economic and social development be considered as countering terrorism? In the Global Strategy, the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism comprise a broad group of factors. From a policy standpoint, we might want to discuss how development goals and objectives relate in more practical and concrete terms to the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

In this regard speakers focused on the prospects of Focus Area 19 entitled "Peaceful and non-violent societies, rule of law and capable institutions"¹, which is part of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals document that was distributed by the co-chairs as consolidation of Member States' input during the last eight sessions (not a zero draft for the future of the sustainable development goals). Participants discussed the ways the link between development, rule of law, good governance, human rights and violence might be reflected in the future sustainable development goals: (1) two stand-alone goals on peaceful and non-violent societies and the rule of law, good governance and human rights respectively; (2) one goal that combines these aspects; (3) mainstreamed as targets under other goals such as the means of implementation; (4) a reference in the narrative; or (5) no reference at all. Participants agreed that excluding the links between development, rule of law, good governance, human rights and violence would not respond to today's development challenges.

In the context of the implementation of Pillar I of the Global Strategy, it was made clear that whatever outcome Member States will agree upon, it will have a strong impact on the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

Panellists of the opening session repeatedly pointed out that Pillar I of the Global Strategy presents a platform for broad cross-sectoral United Nations cooperation and an example for the recognition of the important interlinkages between development, peace and security and counter-terrorism. Participants stressed that it is likely that this nexus will be prominently featured during the fourth review of the Global Strategy in Summer 2014.

¹ Version of 19 March 2014.

I. United Nations cooperation and assistance in the fields of rule of law, human rights and good governance to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism (Session I)

The first substantive session increased complexity by including the dimension of the rule of law, human rights and good governance, which is essential to all pillars of the Global Strategy. Participants remarked that further addressing these issues will not only strengthen institutions and trust between the state and citizens, it will also improve human security in the long term. It was repeatedly emphasized that weak systems and policies can lead to a growing threat of violence and a breeding ground for radicalization and terrorist activities.

Participants also pointed to challenges in the field of the rule of law, human rights and good governance. One of them relates to the difficulty to measure related goals and targets. Another is short-term success. It was mentioned that people in places that have not seen governmental institutions for decades, might not develop trust in these institutions fast enough to achieve desired results. The inability to reach consensus of Member States in concluding a comprehensive counter-terrorism convention was also mentioned as another legal and policy challenge. The need for accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law and the need to provide transitional justice mechanisms were also emphasized.

II. United Nations cooperation and assistance in addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the context of the post-2015 development framework (Session II)

The second session focused on United Nations cooperation and assistance in addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the context of the post-2015 development framework.

During this session, it was mentioned that beyond Focus Area 19 other OWG Focus Areas and targets are also relevant to nonviolence and the conditions conducive to counter-terrorism, such as the proposals on employment and poverty, which could support addressing the conditions conducive.

Another issue that was raised during this session is the role of developed countries in implementing the new and universal sustainable development goals, if they include peace and nonviolence objectives. Specific indicators for these countries could relate to homicide or domestic violence rates. It was also highlighted that poor socio-economic policies anywhere can lead to higher chances for inequalities and the conditions conducive and thereby the potential to threaten peaceful societies with violence and radicalization.

Panellists also addressed the question of how cross-sectoral United Nations cooperation on counter-terrorism could be broadened to include United Nations Country Teams, special political missions and peacekeeping operations. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel was repeatedly highlighted as a good example for a process to develop a common cross-sectoral approach to a sub-region. The challenges still lie in its implementation.

III. The role of youth engagement and skill development as an enabler for social cohesion that could reduce marginalization and the subsequent sense of victimization that propels extremism and the recruitment of terrorists (Session III)

The third session focused on the role of youth engagement and skill development in countering terrorism. Participants highlighted the importance of this subject for the conditions conducive and also highlighted several joint United Nations projects on youth employment and skill development in different parts of the world to decrease marginalization and foster access of youth to the labour market. It was stressed that it is important to scale up successful small projects and to advocate for their inclusion into national education policies to increase their impact. At the same time, it was also emphasized that the risk of overpromising project outcome and outputs can worsen existing problems, for example, training programmes that release young participants into unemployment.

The quality of education was another matter. Despite increased access, the quality of education remains deficient - around 130 million children that went to school for several years are not able to read or write. Participants also pointed to the challenge that some private institutions that advocate radical views in some cases.

Moreover, panellists highlighted the difficulties in assessing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism due to a lack of research and analysis about how children and youth become radicalized and even recruited into terrorist and armed groups. Participants also shared success stories such as Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) against the recruitment of child soldiers and the momentum behind it.

IV. The role of economic and social development in a holistic approach to counter terrorism (Session IV)

The fourth session focused on the role of economic and social development in a holistic approach to counter terrorism. Speakers highlighted the impact of political and social inequalities in increasing the risk for conflict and instability. Improving political and social equality will provide individuals and communities with more choices and options to foster their own development within a society rather than working against the society from a point of exclusion.

The importance of local elites and leaders for easing or fuelling exclusion was repeatedly stressed in this regard. Participants highlighted that initiatives should neither take a mere top-down or bottom-up but rather a combined approach that engages local communities and elites and fosters their interaction. Engagement should go across Member States and the respective region.

Cultural conditions such as discrimination of religion or language were also seen as contributing to risk of violence and terrorism.

Participants highlighted fiscal realities of many countries and the need for realistic implementation strategies. It was stressed that United Nations strategies were aiming for too ambitious outcomes in some cases.

Some speakers emphasized that terrorist groups took advantage of governmental absence and filled gaps in providing social and educational services while at the same time promoting radical ideas. In this regard, it was mentioned that comprehensive and well-coordinated United Nations cooperation, including by addressing multiple factors such as illicit financial flows, trafficking of drugs and arms and border control, can result in virtuous cycles. It was remarked that the Integrated Assistance on Countering Terrorism (I-ACT) should not be underestimated as it facilitates United Nations coordination to produce joint assessments and the development of joint country strategies.

Participants stressed the important role of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in coordinating United Nations action to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in specially affected countries or regions.

V. Working together on the regional level to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism (Session V)

The fifth session focused on working together on the regional level. Speakers in particular highlighted work in Africa where United Nations has a good track record of inter-agency coordination. Also, African countries are very aware of the link between development and security as illustrated in the ambitious African Union Agenda 2063 “The Future We Want – Unity, Prosperity & Peace.” Participants again referred to the Sahel Strategy as a good model to follow and reference was made to on-going CTITF efforts to support regional strategies in Central Asia, Central Africa and Southern Africa. Some participants cautioned against strategies that were too long term or too ambitious and expensive to have any real impact. It was also noted that more could still be done to include women in the development of strategies which was too often centred on security related matters rather than the conditions conducive.

It was highlighted that United Nations processes should be used to increase regional cooperation between Member States - although some argued that the United Nations could still strengthen its own capacities to work on cross-border issues given its traditional country-specific focus.

Practical examples from West Africa illustrated many of the issues raised during the workshop, including with regard to youth engagement and education to address marginalization and inequality. Involving youth in the use of media to address some of these issues and spread a message of peace was noted as a successful tool. Based on practical experience, it was stressed that technical assistance delivery should be rooted in policy frameworks and respond to the practical needs of the stakeholders. This would, for example, mean that training should not only relate to counter-terrorism, but should cover criminal justice issues more broadly. It was reemphasized that technical assistance engagements must be long term and sustainable as they otherwise could do more damage than good.

Drawing on broader lessons on conflict and development, it was noted that the United Nations would need to increase on-going conflict analysis and design conflict prevention measures deeply in the process. Some suggested that the United Nations should increase the use of Peace and Development Advisors for such analysis purposes.

C. Conclusion

The workshop provided a rare occasion for United Nations entities from very different parts of the United Nations System to discuss its cooperation on addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The workshop was designed to leave room for a constructive and free debate on a very complex theme. Presentations and discussions were held at a high level covering many relevant dimensions and providing much fruit for thought. Several important overarching issues presented themselves during the workshop. Among these, five stood out in particular.

First, participants stressed that the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism also relate to insecurity in general. It has been repeatedly stated that the conditions conducive are not restricted to terrorism but that they are also factors that can increase the risks of other forms of violence and conflict. In that regard, it was mentioned that terrorism should be considered a sub-set of violence.

Second, it was highlighted that it is not one condition or one situation that leads to terrorism. It is a culmination of factors that differs from one situation and one individual to another that can trigger terrorism and insecurity. Participants also highlighted that the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy should take into consideration gender-related concerns. These conditions include lack of rule of law, good governance and human rights, inequalities, especially horizontal inequality, lack of quality education, lack of youth engagement and opportunities and many others. The conditions conducive might not directly cause terrorist actions, but increase the risk for their emergence. When culminating, these conditions can lead to the failure of the social contract as a whole, raising insecurities and a situation where terrorism can thrive.

Third, the importance of context was repeatedly emphasized. There are different factors at play in different countries and regions. There is an increased need to take into account the views of the affected stakeholders and the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in their specific contextual environments. This includes the need for in-depth analysis of the conflict and insecurities before action is taken and projects designed. Continuing analysis is essential to maintain and improve the effectiveness of project implementation.

Fourth, participants agreed that the main objective remains to find effective solutions to the many questions that were raised during the workshop. It was highlighted that choices for people need to be expanded to allow for more opportunities and avoid exclusion. This could be done through different measures such as improving quality education and job opportunities so that, for example, young individuals would be provided with social and economic prospects to start their adult life. It was highlighted that fiscal realities in several countries are a challenging factor. At the same time, it was stressed that measures to improve horizontal equality that focus on equal distribution are not resource demanding. Local ownership remains essential for all assistance and decision-making.

Fifth, given the changing nature of conflict towards internal State situations, terrorism increasingly becomes not only a by-product but a driver of insecurity. Terrorist groups are now able to control large parts of areas in several countries and effectively obstruct sustained development and threaten regional and international security. This point of urgency calls for concerted United Nations assistance and solutions. It was repeatedly mentioned that the post-

2015 development agenda debate provides a unique and important opportunity in this regard. The Secretary-General conveyed in his April 2013 Decision to principals that there “can be no peace without development and vice versa and that this critical nexus needs to be fully addressed in the post-2015 agenda”. He also noted “the proposal of the United Nations Task Team on post-2015 for a fourth dimension on peace and security” to be added to the development agenda in addition to the economic, social and environmental dimensions. Participants agreed that well-coordinated and succinct United Nations input that reflects the important linkages between peace, nonviolence and development needs to be provided continuously to the post-2015 development debates, as it has been done several times already.

D. Follow-up

UNCCT will now embark on further detailed discussions and interactions with relevant stakeholders to translate this exchange of ideas into practical proposals for joint initiatives.

From a preliminary perspective, there seem to be several potential areas that could merit follow-up initiatives.

- Participants recognized the need for further research and analysis relating to conflict situations in general and radicalization and terrorist recruitment in particular.
- Using the above-analysis, United Nations inter-agency cooperation could integrate Country Teams, Special Political Missions and Peacekeeping Operations in designing common preventive efforts to address the conditions conducive in specially affected countries and regions.
- Many stressed the need for more community empowerment that combines top-down and bottom-up approaches and connects citizens and government building a trust relationship. Any initiative focusing on this area should identify and engage community leaders, including those from the religious or cultural sphere and the younger generation.
- Participants highlighted several successful youth education and skill building projects based on local ownership that merit scaling up and advocacy with governments for inclusion into national curricula.

Together with relevant entities, UNCCT will assess these issues in more detail and evaluate the feasibility of spinoff initiatives.

The CTITF Office and its UNCCT stands ready to further foster our dialogue and work with relevant entities intensifying collaborations and partnerships both at Headquarters and in the field.