



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

International Workshop of National Counter-Terrorism Focal Points on “Better linking national and global counter-terrorism efforts”

Vienna International Centre, 12 and 13 October 2009

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

In the past several years, countering terrorism has become a global concern and a high priority of the international community. A number of significant steps have been taken that reflect this concern. This includes the September 2006 United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which provides for a comprehensive response to terrorism at the national, regional and global level.

UN Member States have also sought to strengthen national level counter-terrorism measures. Among the major counter-terrorism priorities of the countries is the national level implementation of their multilateral counter-terrorism commitments. The evolving complex global counter-terrorism obligations and undertakings place significant burdens on Member States, in terms of the required national efforts for their implementation. As a corollary, information sharing at the global, regional and national levels and between these levels needs to be improved, as Member States face significant challenges in achieving an effective flow of information on the global developments to inform the national efforts and vice-versa, which is a requisite enabling condition for effective national implementation.

On the national level, effective implementation of the global framework requires the sustained involvement of a wide array of different national actors engaged in numerous different areas of work, necessitating the contributions of not only security and law enforcement officials, but also a broad range of stakeholders in non-traditional counter-terrorism sectors, including in the areas of human rights, education, social services, development aid, financial sector, and civil society. National level synergy of efforts and effective inter-agency/departmental cooperation are pivotal for successful implementation of national counter-terrorism measures. In addition, an effective channel for communicating pertinent policy issues and, more broadly, sharing information and experiences between countries and among national, regional and global levels, especially the United Nations, is critical. For example, national ministries, including ministries of justice, interior, finance, and intelligence, which have the primary responsibility for countering terrorism, may need to be made more aware of the relevance of global measures to their work at the national level, and ministries of foreign affairs may need to take steps to ensure that the “technical” ministries are adequately informed as to the developments on the international front.

Member States have chosen different ways to accomplish this need for effective information flow. Some of them have opted for the nomination of a focal point (mostly an official in the ministry/department of foreign affairs). Some of these focal points serve additional, multiple functions, such as overseeing or coordinating national policies vis-à-vis the UN and other multilateral bodies.

Although meetings of national counter-terrorism officials do take place at the regional level, in some regions, currently there are few venues that bring together counter-terrorism national focal points from across regions to network and share experiences, good practices and challenges. There is significant value gained by national counter-terrorism focal points engaging with each other on common issues relating to the implementation of national and international counter-terrorism commitments.

The General Assembly’s adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006 was a milestone in the international initiatives to counter terrorism. The 2007 Vienna Symposium on “*Advancing the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*”, that was jointly organized by the Government of Austria, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime made an important contribution to this effort.

It was the first time when Member States, regional and subregional organizations, a wide variety of civil society as well as members of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force came together to discuss the implementation of the Strategy. The re-affirmation of the Strategy in September 2008 underlines the importance Member States attach to this endeavour. However, one of the concerns raised by Member States at the General Assembly's review in September 2008 of progress made with the implementation of the Strategy was how to better link the international action under the auspices of the United Nations with the national action by the Member States. The importance of better connecting the global UN efforts with national efforts was also one of the key conclusions drawn by the 2008 "International Process on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation", initiated by Switzerland in cooperation with Costa Rica, Japan, Slovakia and Turkey, with the support of the Center on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation. The International Process sought to identify ways to make the UN institutions and their efforts more relevant to national counter-terrorism strategies and efforts. Throughout this Process, it was stressed that national counter-terrorism focal points can play a key role in this regard. One of the key recommendations emanating from the Process was that "*national counter-terrorism coordinators or focal points from capitals should periodically meet to discuss concrete Strategy-related issues with the [UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation] Task Force and its entities, assess Strategy implementation efforts, determine policy directions of the Strategy, and discuss how the UN might be able to help national efforts.*"

With a view to fostering greater networking among the national counter-terrorism focal points and to facilitate their role as interface among national, regional and global counter-terrorism efforts, the Governments of Austria, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, also on behalf of the other co-sponsoring Governments of Costa Rica, Japan and Slovakia, in close cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), plan to organize a two-day, **International Workshop of National Counter-Terrorism Focal Points in Vienna on 12-13 October 2009**.

The workshop will provide a global platform for the national focal points, along with relevant representatives from the UN, international and regional organizations, and civil society, to address practical counter-terrorism needs, to learn from each other, and exchange best practices, challenges, and other information concerning national efforts to implement UN counter-terrorism mandates as well as other counter-terrorism activities. Various topics will be put up for discussion by the participants, including the national implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, capacity building assistance and international legal cooperation, national counter-terrorism efforts in better linking the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and obligations resulting from United Nations Security Council resolutions 1267, 1373 and 1540, as well as a discussion on the usefulness of initiating a global network of national counter-terrorism focal points to engage among themselves and the United Nations.

IMPORTANT: The International Workshop in Vienna on 12 and 13 October 2009 is an **informal, albeit high-level meeting. No resolution or any binding document will be negotiated.** The workshop will serve as a forum for information exchange of national counter-terrorism focal points where they can address their needs in terms of international cooperation and information exchange and where they will have the possibility to liaise with their colleagues and representatives from international and regional organizations dealing with counter-terrorism issues. Efforts will be made to enable participation of national focal points from Least Developed Countries. Each panel session would consist of a geographical mix of four or five national coordinators/focal points to stimulate cross-regional exchange of information and experiences. The panellists would each speak for five to seven minutes and then the panel chair would moderate the discussion among all of the participants. A short background note and set of questions for each agenda item will be prepared and circulated to the participants in advance of the workshop to help focus the discussions on issues of practical concern. National focal points and other participants would be encouraged (and expected to) take the floor for short interventions on multiple occasions to highlight national experiences and ask questions on discrete themes as they appear on the meeting's agenda. Opportunities will also be given for informal get-togethers of participants.