CTITF Global Initiative on Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

International Counter-Terrorism Focal Points Conference
on Addressing Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism
and Promoting Regional Cooperation

Organized by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office (CTITF)
in partnership with the
Government of Switzerland

Concept Note
13 – 14 June 2013
Geneva, Switzerland

Background

Since the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288) in September 2006, Member States, United Nations entities and key international and regional organizations have carried out a range of activities to further the implementation of the Global Strategy at the national and regional levels. Over the years, the Global Strategy has become an important strategic element of national and regional counter-terrorism efforts. It is based on four thematic pillars: (i) measures to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; (ii) measures to combat terrorism; (iii) measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and (iv) measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

The consensus adoption of the Global Strategy was a milestone in the multilateral counter-terrorism domain that laid the foundations for a comprehensive and integrated response to terrorism at the national, regional and international levels. Since its adoption, the Global Strategy's implementation has been a key priority of the United Nations system. Subsequent General Assembly review resolutions (A/RES/62/272, A/RES/64/297 and A/RES/66/282) have reaffirmed the Global Strategy and called for greater focus on its practical implementation, which is a responsibility that primarily rests with Member States.

At the Secretary-General's Symposium on International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in September 2011, Member States again underscored the need for the Global Strategy's "full, integrated and timely" implementation.[1]

Over the last 30 months, the CTITF Office, in partnership with a select group of regional States and relevant CTITF entities, has organized four regional workshops – in Southeast Asia

---

[1] Chairman's Summary, Report of the Secretary-General's Symposium on International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, published by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), 2012.

(Bali, Indonesia; November 2010), Eastern Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; July 2011), Southern Africa (Windhoek, Namibia; October 2011) and South Asia (Dhaka, Bangladesh; May 2012) – that brought together States, regional organizations, civil society and locally-based United Nations offices and explored the policy dimensions and practical challenges in implementing the Global Strategy. Each regional workshop concluded with a set of Chair's Summary, which highlighted key regional priorities and offered some recommendations on the way forward.[2] The initiative under which these workshops were organized, titled "Promoting the Implementation and In-Depth Knowledge of the Global Strategy at the Regional Level" has been supported by the Governments of Austria, Germany, Norway, Turkey, Switzerland and the United States. The fifth regional workshop under the project is expected to take place in Nigeria, bringing together States from the West African and Sahel regions, in July 2013.

The Conference

The Conference will be convened at the United Nations Office in Geneva on 13 – 14 June 2013. The Conference shall be opened by H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Vice-President of the Federal Council and Foreign Minister of Switzerland, and Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and Chairman of the CTITF. Key States that have co-organized regional initiatives and workshops with CTITF on the implementation of the Global Strategy, including the Governments of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Namibia and Nigeria, will also be invited at the ministerial level to offer their policy perspectives.

At the aforementioned regional workshops already held, most participants underscored the needs, challenges and opportunities in the implementation of Pillar I of the Global Strategy, which cites "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" as key elements that are conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This Conference will seek to focus attention on these important topics included under Pillar I of the Global Strategy and help identify practical ways, including through civil society input, to implement them.

The Conference will comprise of an opening and closing session, and the following five substantive sessions:

Session I: Opening Session

The Conference shall be opened by H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Vice-President of the Federal Council and Foreign Minister of Switzerland, and Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and Chairman of the CTITF. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, will also be invited to speak during the session. The session will highlight the strategic context in which Pillar I topics need to be prioritized for programming and implementation. In addition to the keynote statement from the Foreign Minister, eminent representatives of the select group of States who have participated in organizing regional workshops on promoting in-depth knowledge of the Global Strategy will also make statements.

---

[2] The reports from the regional events are available on the CTITF website at http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/ctitf/proj_raisingawareness.shtml

Session II: The importance of regional cooperation in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Today, terrorist groups operating in any particular region are more adept at benefiting from the narratives, practices or support of each other. For States in a region affected by terrorism, fragmented policy-making leads to incoherent regional counter-terrorism activities, weakens coordination at the operational level and wastes valuable resources. In many instances, a rapidly evolving terrorist threat requires more responsive regional counter-terrorism mechanisms that are based on regionally-identified priorities and attuned to regionally-observed terrorist typologies.

The effective implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy through meaningful coordination and holistic responses could therefore be addressed through improved regional cooperation and better integrated and coordinated regional mechanisms, supported by adequate resources and taking into account local conditions and ground realities. In the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Member States "encouraged…international, regional and subregional organizations to support the implementation of the Strategy, including through mobilizing resources and expertise;" they also "recognized" the need to "take advantage of the framework provided by relevant international, regional and subregional organizations to share best practices in counter-terrorism capacity-building and to facilitate their contributions to the international community's efforts in this area."

The nature, levels and mechanics of regional counter-terrorism cooperation vary across regions and are often closely related to the political will of regional States and the strength and mandates of respective regional organizations. Fostering regional cooperation is, however, a key aspect in achieving effectiveness in counter-terrorism activities and the full implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. This session could explore the following questions:

- In what ways can national governments and regional organizations contribute to strengthening regional cooperation in key regions of the world?
- How can the United Nations system help strengthen regional counter-terrorism mechanisms in those regions?
- In cases where regional organizations and counter-terrorism mechanisms have registered some successes, how have they connected international counter-terrorism efforts, and the Global Strategy, to regional activities?

Session III: Linkages between development and security

Among the many conditions that are conducive to the spread of terrorism, the lack of economic opportunities and the absence of balanced and sustainable development are particularly important. Groups and individuals within vulnerable and poverty-stricken serve as potentially ripe recruits for radicalization. Extremists often take advantage of the situation resulting from poverty and marginalization to foster the conditions that enable them to carry out their violent actions.

The international community must therefore redouble its efforts to bring the fruits of balanced and sustainable development to areas where such development is lacking. Member States have recognized this powerful linkage between development and security by reaffirming, in Pillar 1 of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, their commitment to, among others, "eradicate poverty and promote sustained economic growth, sustainable development and global prosperity for all."

But as important as they are, economic development and poverty-alleviation measures alone are not sufficient if individuals and groups feel marginalized from a nation's social, economic and political processes. This necessarily calls for equal emphasis on the human aspects of development as well – from social and political inclusion to enhancing overall human development as measured through various social, economic and political indicators of the Human Development Index. The global commitment on achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been an important aspect of this effort. Finally, all efforts need to be underpinned by the values of human rights and the rule of law in order for peaceful and stable societies to be built. In this context, the positive role of civil society should not be overlooked. By virtue of being rooted to the ground, civil society groups serve as an invaluable resource for ideas, and they also provide a strong link to the local communities.

The challenge before the UN System, as well as the international community, then, is to further explore workable ways of translating Pillar I's developmental vision into practical actions. This session provides an opportunity to do so. Participants are encouraged to discuss the following questions:

- How can development goals of Pillar I be better programmed into Member States' counter-terrorism strategies in practicable ways that further overall security?
- How can coordination and cooperation between development and counterterrorism capacity building efforts (including within the United Nations) be strengthened without compromising or politicizing development work and without diluting counterterrorism efforts?
- How can the international community better assist Member States take advantage of the full range of specialized assistance that the United Nations system can offer in this area?
- What are some of the practical ways to engage civil society groups more integrally into the development agenda, as outlined in Pillar I?

Session IV: The role of civil society in assisting the implementation of Pillar I

The role of civil society remains a vital area in supporting efforts to implement the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, for the Strategy specifically encourages "non-governmental organizations and civil society to engage, as appropriate, on how to enhance efforts to implement the Strategy." For the Strategy to be implemented effectively on the ground, civil society organizations have the potential to provide both strategic support and access at the grassroots level. The Third Review Resolution also encouraged civil society to engage in efforts, as appropriate, in implementing the Global Strategy. Civil society activities could contribute to ensuring a balanced and coherent approach to the effective implementation of the Strategy, without necessarily adding a counter-terrorism label to their work.

Civil society organizations often play a key role in undertaking measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism through their work in education, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, amongst others. The key question to be addressed is how to enhance the role of civil society in implementing the Strategy. One of the main obstacles to effective civil society engagement on counter-terrorism activities is the lack of awareness of the Global Strategy amongst civil society organizations and the value they can bring to national efforts against terrorism. Many non-government organizations remain wary of the counter-terrorism label and the risk that counter-terrorism policies can sometimes pose to human rights and the rule of law

issues in some States. In turn, some Member States are also suspicious of civil society involvement. These inherent tensions need to be resolved to move the Strategy forward, particularly on key issues such as victims, discrimination, good governance and socio-economic marginalisation.

During this session, participants will be invited to examine the following, among others:

- How can national and regional counter-terrorism strategies involve or create space for civil society involvement?
- How can Member States and the United Nations more effectively utilise the scope and value that civil society organisations can bring to counter terrorism measures?
- What kind of awareness-raising efforts must be undertaken to ensure full and effective civil society participation in implementing the Global Strategy?
- What kind of action can be undertaken to lessen some of the tensions between civil society and Member States?

Session V: The role of victims of terrorism in countering the terrorist narrative

The United Nations' work on victims of terrorism is articulated under Pillar I of the Global Strategy where the "dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations" is identified as one of the key issue that generates the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. The Pillar further identifies a number of measures aimed at addressing these conditions, namely "to promote international solidarity in support of victims and foster the involvement of civil society in a global campaign against terrorism and for its condemnation." Therefore, the Strategy strives to ensure that victims are not forgotten, sidelined or marginalized within the counter terrorism debate. Pillar IV of the Strategy, which underscores the respect for human rights and the rule of law, also stresses upon "the need to promote and protect the rights of victims of terrorism" through a number of measures.

The General Assembly's resolution on the Third Review of the Global Strategy in June 2012 (A/Res/66/282) for the first time specifically emphasises the role of victims and the central role they can play in countering terrorism and urges the United Nations bodies and entities, amongst others, "to step up their efforts to provide, upon request, technical assistance for building the capacity of Member States in the development and implementation of programmes of assistance and support for victims of terrorism."

The challenge of confronting the spread of hate, intolerance and terrorism has been taken up by civil society, especially those representing victims of terrorism, who can reach a far broader audience on developing a counter-narrative against terrorism. Mainstreaming victims' voices into the context of the counter-narrative can be an effective way to offset the hate and violence propagated by violent extremists. During this session, participants could assess the following topics:

- How can States strengthen victims' groups, promote their work and integrate victims groups' activities in national counter-terrorism efforts?
- How can victim's voices be better amplified within the counter narrative context?
- How can national Governments further contribute to protecting and assisting victims, especially in the criminal justice system and through rehabilitation programmes, in order to stress the point that those affected by terrorist violence

will be met with compassion and support?

Session VI: Dialogue, understanding and countering the appeal of terrorism

Member States have increasingly focused attention on some of the drivers of hate, intolerance and bigotry that create conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. International organizations have also conducted activities that help identify how individuals are exploited by terrorist groups and radicalized to commit violence against innocent civilians. Empirical evidence that shows the effectiveness of counter-radicalization measures is hard to come by in many cases, but States are increasingly seeing the value of intervening at early stages in order to prevent extremism.

In Pillar I of the Global Strategy, Member States committed themselves to address conditions that allow terrorism to spread. That commitment gained new strength after the President of the General Assembly's Symposium on Dialogue, Understanding and Countering the Appeal of Terrorism in New York in 2012. During discussions at the Third Review of the Global Strategy, Member States vowed to pursue a comprehensive and balanced approach to countering terrorism. Ideological factors, intolerance, unresolved conflicts, inequality, discrimination, social marginalization, political exclusion and absence of good governance often provide the enabling environment for terrorism to grow. In such situations, law-enforcement and judicial measures alone do not suffice to counter terrorism, but need to be supplemented with more long-term measures to foster dialogue and understanding.

The United Nations system has actively engaged on preventing violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. Workshops on preventing and prohibiting incitement to commit terrorist violence, counter-radicalization programming and on improving cross-cultural understanding have been convened by Member States and CTITF entities. Civil society organizations have also contributed to multilateral and national efforts on the prevention of terrorism, and have covered much ground in learning and sharing best practices in this field.

Addressing the provisions of Pillar I will need strengthened efforts to dispel the misunderstandings and misconceptions among peoples, cultures and religions by fostering a culture of dialogue and understanding towards building an alliance of civilizations. This includes building a more effective support network for victims of terrorism. It will also require developing and implementing effective de-radicalization programmes for those who have already been radicalized. This session provides a valuable opportunity to explore the following issues, among others:

- How can Member States in general, and the UN System in particular, assist in spreading conflict-resolution skills-training at the local level? If so, what are the opportunities there?
- How can the UN System promote dialogue and understanding between cultures and religions? What should be the methodology/structure of these interactions?
- How can we develop effective counter-radicalization programmes? Are there avenues for positive interventions to counter-radicalize already radicalized individuals?

Closing Session:

The Closing Session is dedicated to outlining a possible course of action, on the basis of the discussion during the Conference, for the international community on strengthening

multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation on the four identified topics under Pillar I of the Global Strategy. The Chair of the Conference will share a brief summary of key recommendations emanating from the Conference.

Each thematic segment, led by a session chairperson, will include 5 minute statements from invited eminent speakers, followed by an interactive exercise in order to provide participants with an opportunity to share their views. The meeting will be open to all Member States' representations in Geneva and accredited non-governmental organizations. The Conference will produce a Chairman's Summary that will help in informing the future work of the United Nations system and the CTITF on the implementation of Pillar I and other pillars of the Global Strategy. The Conference will also lead to the publication of a comprehensive report, which will compile presentations and statements delivered at the event, summarize the discussions and include recommendations and key findings for the reference of Member States, international organizations and all relevant stakeholders. An annotated agenda and a logistical note will be issued separately closer to the date of the Conference.