



UN COUNTER-TERRORISM INITIATIVES: A NEW RESOLVE

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October 20, 2017

(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



In order to strengthen the efforts against combating and countering terrorism, the United Nations adopted a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in September 2006, which came to be known as a global instrument intended to counter terror at the national, regional and international level.

The Strategy, in the form of a resolution (A/RES/60/288) and an annexed Plan of Action comprised of four pillars:

1. Pillar I: which explained the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism;
2. Pillar two: among others, included measures to prevent and combat terrorism, like enforcing border controls and combating the financing of terrorism;
3. Pillar three: focused on measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and also to strengthen the United Nations system in this regard;
4. Pillar IV: laid emphasis on the need to respect human rights and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of any counter terrorism effort, underscoring the importance attached to victims of terrorism by member states and recognizing that without the participation of victims, terrorism cannot be comprehensively defeated.¹

¹ Report of the UN Conference on Human Rights of Victims of Terrorism, February 2016.
https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism.ctitf/files/FINAL%20Report%20of%20the%20Conference_0.pdf

In order to strengthen the efforts against combating and countering terrorism, the United Nations continues to engage member states on these priority areas.

In June, 2017 the General Assembly approved the establishment of a new United Nations office to help Member States implement the Organization's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. A consensus resolution was adopted under which the 193-nation body also welcomed Secretary-General António Guterres' initiative to transfer relevant functions out of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), and on to the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.² It was decided that the new office would have five major functions: the first being to provide leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General from across the United Nations system; the second, to enhance coordination and coherence across the 38 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; the third aimed at strengthening the delivery of the United Nations counterterrorism capacity building assistance to member states. The fourth and fifth include improving visibility and advocacy along with resource mobilization and also to ensure that due importance is given to counterterrorism across the United Nations system.

Just as the threat from terrorism has gone from bad to worse, there is a dire need for gearing up efforts to tackle the menace of terrorism, which continues to haunt people around the world. According to the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, global efforts and policies to prevent extremism must encompass all segments of the society, in particular those who have suffered structural discrimination and marginalization, "Policies that limit human rights only end up alienating religious and ethnic communities, who would normally have every interest in fighting extremism."³

The Secretary General has also commended the efforts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, who in 2011, had adopted the Ashgabat Declaration and the Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia – the first regional initiative of its kind. The UN chief further called on the member countries to continue to work together on issues such as countering the financing of terrorism, enhancing border security, nurturing dialogue with religious institutions and leaders, as well as highlighting the role of the media in addressing terrorism and violent extremism. The threat from terrorism and violent extremism has gotten worse with terrorist organizations becoming increasingly

² General Assembly Approves creation of a new UN Counter Terrorism Office.
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56984#.WdcXWzBRWUK>

³ Not only strong, but smart policies needed to combat terrorism – UN chief.
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56962#.WdccCjBRWUK>

transnational, enabling and inspiring attacks and radicalizing individuals, particularly youth, outside of conflict zones. As a result, multilateral solutions are therefore essential for successfully addressing these growing challenges.

The new UN initiative on its 2006 counter-terrorism strategy intends to overhaul the existing strategy. Under this new initiative, an effective, future-oriented and unbiased counter-terrorism programme to support member states is likely to be built on five key areas:

1. Strengthening international counter-terrorism cooperation;
2. Preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism;
3. Addressing the terrorist use of the Internet;
4. Enhancing the foreign terrorist fighters' threat;
5. Increasing the sharing of information and good practices.

The head of the newly-created United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Ivanovich told the Security Council that a framework to devise a consistent, well-coordinated programme to support member states, as well as the priority areas of such work was necessary.⁴ Establishing a coherent and well-coordinated counter terror strategy is the main aim of this new initiative, which aims to encompass all aspects needed for a strong and effective strategy.

Intensifying coordination and unity is the top priority for the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in order to defy threats to international peace and security caused by terrorism. In order to fix loopholes in the previous UN counter-terrorism strategy, the newly established Office intends to make a significant difference in its support to member states by bringing leadership, mobilizing resources and developing a coherent and well-coordinated “One United Nations” framework to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. The new Global Counter-terrorism Strategy therefore is a step in the right direction, aimed at strengthening efforts to curb terrorism and overcome any shortcomings in the strategy.

⁴ At Security Council, top counter-terrorism officials stress ‘All of UN’ approach to tackle scourge. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57765#.WdcbPDBRWUk>