



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
15 February 2021

Original: English

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## **Letter dated 12 February 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and Ms. Michèle Coninx, Executive Director, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts” convened on Wednesday, 10 February 2021.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* **Barbara Woodward**  
President of the Security Council



**Annex I****Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov**

Allow me to begin by expressing my sincere condolences to the Governments and the people of Afghanistan, Austria, France, Iraq, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and all other Member States that recently suffered terrorist attacks. My heartfelt thoughts and sympathy go to the survivors and to the families of the victims.

I thank the Security Council for the opportunity to present the twelfth report (S/2021/98) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to international peace and security, and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering this threat, as mandated by resolution 2368 (2017).

I am pleased that Assistant Secretary-General Coninx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), is joining me to present this report, which our offices prepared jointly with the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, led by Mr. Edmund Fitton-Brown.

The threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security is on the rise again. It is crucial that Member States remain focused and united to counter it, despite the strains and competing priorities brought by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

While ISIL has not developed a purposeful strategy to exploit the pandemic, its efforts to regroup and reinvigorate its activities gained further momentum in the second half of 2020. Its core in Iraq and Syria and its affiliates in other conflict zones have continued to take advantage of the disruption caused by the virus to step up their operations, with a number of high-profile attacks. ISIL fighters have maintained the ability to move and operate, including across unprotected borders.

As ISIL's regional affiliates entrench themselves and gain in autonomy and strength, they could provide the group new capabilities and options to conduct external operations. Member States warn that ISIL could regain the capacity to orchestrate attacks in different parts of the world in the course of 2021.

Outside conflict zones, the risk of exposure to ISIL propaganda and incitement has continued to grow as people — especially the young — spend more time at home and online. This could lead to a sudden rash of attacks in some countries when COVID-19-related movement restrictions ease. Meanwhile, the socioeconomic toll and political fallout of the pandemic could further aggravate the longer-term threat posed by ISIL and other terrorist groups by widening the pool of individuals receptive to radicalization and recruitment.

ISIL's primary focus remains resurgence in Iraq and Syria, where the international community continues to grapple with the legacies of the group's so-called "caliphate". Some 10,000 ISIL fighters, including foreign terrorist fighters in the low thousands, remain active in the region, the majority of them in Iraq, pursuing a protracted insurgency. These sizable remnants are assessed to pose a major, long-term and global threat. They are organized in small cells hiding in desert and rural areas and moving across the border between the two countries, waging attacks.

More tragically, the international community has made hardly any progress in addressing the situation of the thousands of individuals, mostly women and children, suspected of having links with ISIL and held in precarious conditions in the region. The already dire humanitarian and security situation in the detention facilities and displacement camps is deteriorating even further, especially in Al-Hol. The most

basic of human rights are undermined, and many instances of terrorist radicalization, fund-raising, training and incitement have been reported. Nearly two years after the territorial defeat of ISIL, some 27,500 foreign children are still in harm's way in the camps in north-east Syria, including about 8,000 children from some 60 countries other than Iraq, 90 per cent of whom are under 12 years of age.

The significant challenges faced by Member States in ensuring the protection of vulnerable individuals, accountability for terrorist crimes and security are not becoming any less urgent or complex with time, quite the contrary. These challenges and risks are growing more serious with neglect and could have a long-term impact not just in the region, but also globally.

In October last year, ISIL reiterated that orchestrating jailbreaks and assisting escapees was a priority. The group is also aware of the propaganda value of any potential outbreak of COVID-19 and associated unrest in holding facilities.

Beyond the humanitarian urgency, the moral imperative and the legal obligations, taking action is a strategic security imperative. So, I would like to reiterate the Secretary-General's call upon Member States for the voluntary repatriation of adults and children stranded in Iraq and Syria, with the consent of relevant Governments and in line with international law.

The efforts of several Member States in that regard are commendable, especially Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan, which have repatriated hundreds of affected children from north-east Syria. A number of other States, especially European countries, have conducted fewer repatriations. I hope they will actively step up their efforts. I encourage them all to share data with the United Nations and their experience with other Member States, so that collectively we resolve this untenable situation.

Over the past six months, ISIL was particularly active in a number of African States affected by conflict. Its affiliates in West Africa conducted numerous attacks against the military and civilians at the end of 2020 in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and in the Lake Chad basin, demonstrating determination and adaptability.

The Islamic State Central Africa Province is emerging as a strong regional affiliate, employing sophisticated tactics and capabilities, emboldened by recent operational successes in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Europe, a string of attacks in France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, partly inspired by ISIL, provided a stark reminder of the diffuse threat from homegrown terrorist attacks by lone actors. The attacks also revived debates in Europe on how to address terrorist radicalization in prisons and ensure effective rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and the monitoring of terrorist offenders upon release from prison.

Turning to Asia, ISIL's affiliate in Afghanistan is assessed to still have between 1,000 and 2,200 fighters spread across several provinces. Despite degraded military capabilities, it has continued to exploit difficulties in the Afghan peace process and claimed a number of high-profile attacks.

ISIL also remains resilient in South-East Asia, with a number of factions. The involvement of women in suicide bombings has continued, with two such attacks in the Philippines in August 2020.

Assistant Secretary-General Coninx will brief you on the continued support provided by the United Nations system to Member States in addressing the threat posed by ISIL during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My Office has continued to innovate and to work closely with all our partners under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact to ensure business continuity, expanding our support toolbox.

I would like to briefly highlight a few key examples.

First, in August 2020, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in my Office launched a new Global Framework to coordinate with UNICEF the provision of support from 15 United Nations entities, including CTED, to requesting Member States with regard to individuals returned from or remaining in north-east Syria and Iraq.

United Nations entities have already developed a number of field-driven project proposals to implement the Global Framework in Central Asia and Iraq, which recent contributions from donor States are making possible.

In September 2020, the Centre also launched a Global Programme on Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration, in close cooperation with CTED and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, under which we have developed projects to assist Indonesia, Burkina Faso and Lake Chad basin States. If so requested, we are also ready to support Mozambique in this area. These efforts fully conform to the requirements of relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and the related addendum.

Secondly, we made significant progress in the implementation of the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, led by my Office to support Member States in implementing resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017) and 2482 (2019). The programme used an online assessment methodology developed with CTED to conduct virtual deep-dive assessments to Botswana, Djibouti, the Gambia, Maldives and Sierra Leone. We also delivered the programme's first two online training courses, in October 2020 for Botswana and in January 2021 for Sierra Leone.

Thirdly, we pushed ahead with the implementation of the Global Capacity-Building Programme on Countering Terrorism Financing launched by the Centre in June last year, in response to resolutions 2462 (2019) and 2482 (2019). Virtual training workshops on protecting the non-profit sector from terrorist misuse were successfully organized for Bahrain and Tajikistan.

And, fourthly, last month we launched a new Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets, including from unmanned aerial systems, with our partners from CTED, INTERPOL, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the Alliance of Civilizations. This responds to resolution 2341 (2017). The programme will assist beneficiary Member States in the development of national strategies and action plans to protect vulnerable targets and provide operational training and mentoring services to support their implementation.

In this year of milestones, including the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1373 (2001), the time could not be more relevant for Member States to recommit themselves to multilateral action against terrorism, under the auspices of the United Nations. The Security Council has already led the way. Presidential statement S/PRST/2021/1, of 12 January, stresses the need "to further strengthen the unified and coordinated international response" to the scourge of terrorism.

We must defeat ISIL in cyberspace. We must be prepared to disrupt new attacks by ISIL in different parts of the world. We must tackle the threat posed by its regional affiliates, especially in Africa. And we must urgently solve the protracted issue of ISIL members, and especially associated women and children stranded in Syria and Iraq, lest our failure enables the group's resurgence.

The United Nations system, working through the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, will continue to stand by Member States as they rise to these challenges.

## Annex II

### **Briefing by Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Michèle Coninx**

I thank you for the opportunity to brief the Council on the twelfth report (S/2021/98) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the continued efforts of the United Nations and Member States to counter the threat. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov for his overview of the report and to commend both the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, for their invaluable contributions to the report.

We continue to face a complex and volatile global security landscape. Transnational terrorism is just one of several overlapping generational challenges facing us — each of which requires a coordinated and multilateral response.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is the most urgent challenge. It has also exacerbated or accelerated many of the underlying issues fuelling the other challenges, leaving us in a precarious situation. As we have heard, in the short term the pandemic does not appear to have increased the threat posed by ISIL or other terrorist groups. Member States' measures to contain the spread of the virus — such as restrictions on movement and gatherings — continue to make it more difficult for terrorists to travel, gather or access potential target sites outside conflict zones. In areas of conflict, however, terrorists have typically maintained their ability to travel and operate, despite the pandemic.

These conclusions echo the findings of the most recent update of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) on the impact of COVID-19 on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, which was issued in December 2020.

The strength of ISIL's affiliates in Africa remains a particular concern, as it continues to exacerbate a worsening humanitarian situation in many regions.

In an effort to help address this situation, the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the 1267, 1989, 2253 ISIL/(Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee are planning to hold a joint open briefing later this year on "ISIL in Africa: The nature of the threat and responses".

CTED's analysis also indicates that COVID-19 has detracted attention or redirected resources from several long-standing counter-terrorism policy challenges. United Nations entities remain deeply concerned at the dire situation facing hundreds of thousands of individuals — mostly children and women — stranded in camps and prisons in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. These individuals are struggling to meet their day-to-day basic needs because they lack access to food, medicine, hygiene and shelter. COVID-19 has further restricted their access to humanitarian assistance and led to the suspension of protection and support services.

However, Member States continue to face challenges in their efforts to repatriate their nationals, including women and men, children and the elderly, from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. States also continue to face significant obstacles to their efforts to ensure accountability for the crimes committed by ISIL and to secure justice and redress for ISIL's countless victims.

COVID-19 has forced many States to delay hearings or extend proceedings, prolonged pretrial detention and caused case backlogs. And this has also prevented the victims of terrorism from gaining access to proceedings.

Nonetheless, it is important to reflect on the progress made, both over the past six months and indeed since the Secretary-General's first report on ISIL (S/2016/92), issued in 2016.

Although levels of terrorist violence have ebbed and flowed — and will no doubt continue to do so — there has been a consistent and welcome downward trend over the past five years.

As the terrorist threat has evolved, so too has the response of the United Nations. That response has been driven by the Security Council's adoption of a number of resolutions that have consistently emphasized the need for enhanced international cooperation and coordination, as well as the need to ensure a human rights-compliant, gender-sensitive approach to counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism.

CTED has played a unique role in supporting the efforts of Member States to implement those resolutions through its engagement and dialogue with Member States, United Nations agencies and other implementing partners — in recent months primarily via online tools, of course.

The Secretary-General's report makes clear that Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic remain ISIL's primary focus. Under the guidance of the CTC, CTED plans to conduct a hybrid follow-up assessment visit to Iraq and other neighbouring States. That will allow us to identify challenges that still need to be addressed in order to effectively counter the evolving threat in the region.

CTED also continues to prioritize the Committee's recommendations to Member States on dealing with returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters formerly associated with ISIL.

We recently launched a joint initiative with the Government of Indonesia, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNOCT on strengthening supervision and community-based treatment for the rehabilitation and reintegration of terrorist and violent extremist defendants and offenders. That initiative, which is supported by the Government of the United Kingdom and Japan, will identify good practices to be disseminated throughout South and South-East Asia.

CTED's ongoing efforts to help Member States review and update their national legislation have strengthened their ability to bring terrorists to justice while protecting and promoting international law, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Working in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and in consultation with other relevant stakeholders, CTED is also currently preparing a thematic study of the links between counter-terrorism frameworks and international humanitarian law with a view to raising awareness of the complexity of this issue, as well as the urgent need to address it.

CTED has continued to strengthen its dialogue with 14 Member States particularly impacted by the foreign terrorist fighters phenomenon in order to develop their capacities in the areas of border management, law enforcement and firearms control through its unique role in leading deep-dive assessment missions within the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact framework, coordinated by UNOCT.

Our work with UNOCT to facilitate the delivery of technical assistance for capacity-building, as a follow-up to CTC assessment visits, also includes playing a key role in the One United Nations approach missions, which are conducted under the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme to help States develop advance passenger information and Passenger Name Record systems to prevent terrorist movements.

CTED's analysis indicates that the financial impact of COVID-19 may make terrorist groups more reliant on criminal activities, including drug smuggling, trafficking minerals and precious stones, fraud, cybercrime and the sale of counterfeit medicines.

Starting this year, CTED will also produce annual assessments of gaps identified and areas requiring more action in relation to States' implementation of the counter-terrorism financing provisions of the relevant Council resolutions. Our aim is to assist UNOCT and other United Nations entities to design targeted technical assistance and capacity-building efforts.

CTED also recently launched an initiative within the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact framework to produce guidance for States on how to counter the financing of terrorism in full compliance with international human rights law. That will include inputs from all stakeholders concerned, especially our civil society partners.

Recognizing that technology remains a significant force-multiplier for terrorist groups — including their recruitment, propaganda, communication and fundraising — CTED has also continued to deepen its engagement with the technology sector. In November, the CTED-supported Tech Against Terrorism initiative launched a beta version of its Terrorist Content Analytics Platform (TCAP) — a centralized platform designed to help technology companies identify the use of their services for terrorist purposes. TCAP alerts serve more than 60 small-to-large technology companies, representing the full ecosystem of companies whose services have been misused by ISIL.

Despite the significant progress achieved in recent years, ISIL and its affiliates remain a continuing threat. Extreme right-wing or racially and ethnically motivated terrorism is also a cause of increasing concern in many parts of the world and is characterized by increasing global interconnectedness, lethality and transnational linkages.

The COVID-19 pandemic will likely continue to present the international community with significant and multifaceted challenges, including in relation to counter-terrorism. Even though international focus has rightly shifted to addressing the virus, we must be careful not to jeopardize the success we have achieved in countering terrorism.

We must continue to encourage the identification of shared, global priorities based on universal values of justice, equality and human dignity. That can be achieved only through a comprehensive, coordinated One United Nations approach aimed at assisting Member States to develop and implement effective counter-terrorism measures while also addressing conditions conducive to terrorism and violent extremism.

CTED stands ready to continue to fulfil its unique and vital role in ensuring that approach based on its assessments, dialogue with Member States, partnerships and analysis and expertise.

## Annex III

### **Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

China thanks Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Coninsx for their briefings and welcomes the report submitted by Secretary-General Guterres (S/2021/98).

According to the Secretary-General's report, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has not given up its attempt to regroup in Iraq and Syria and may increase its operational capacity worldwide this year, thus posing a greater threat to international peace and security. Even during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, terrorists in the conflict zones of Africa, Afghanistan and other areas are still moving around and orchestrating attacks. The international fight against terrorism has a long way to go.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001) and the establishment of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), concerning counter-terrorism, as well as the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Looking back at global counter-terrorism cooperation, we must recognize that it is necessary to completely root out terrorist organizations, including ISIL, and that all countries should adhere to multilateralism, strengthen international cooperation and build the broadest possible united front against terrorism. Terrorism is the common enemy of humankind, and there are no good or bad terrorists.

We must abandon double standards in the fight against terrorism. In order to fully promote the central role of the United Nations, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate should continue to support the efforts of Member States to protect civilians, combat the financing of terrorism, monitor their borders, promote counter-terrorism and deradicalization campaigns and assist them in fully implementing the relevant Council resolutions, as well as the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and in the face of the evolving terrorism challenge, the international community should have new, flexible and effective tools. We must be highly vigilant against terrorist forces that incite and advocate terrorist activities by taking advantage of the opportunities or loopholes presented by the pandemic.

The Internet is an important battlefield in the fight against terrorism. Terrorist organizations such as ISIL continue their illegal online activities unchecked, such as spreading extremist ideologies, inciting terrorism, recruiting and funding for terrorism. The international community must strengthen cooperation and not let the Internet become a safe haven for terrorists.

The protracted issue of former ISIL associates poses a serious humanitarian and security challenge. All parties should take up their responsibilities under international law. The Council should develop a political stance and legal framework for addressing the issue as soon as possible, so as to facilitate repatriation to the countries of origin. In that regard, China welcomes the positive measures taken by United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, to assist countries affected in repatriating foreign terrorist fighters and their families, especially women and children stranded in Iraq and Syria. China supports countries in sharing useful experiences with the United Nations and its Member States to promote best practices for addressing the problem of foreign terrorist fighters and gradually build positive momentum.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that we must address both the symptoms and root causes of terrorism and integrate political, economic, judicial, social and other measures with a view to eradicating the root causes of terrorism and extremism. The international community should pay more attention to the issue of development, especially as it relates to youth, education and employment. Promoting the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is essential to our global counter-terrorism efforts.

## Annex IV

### **Statement by the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations**

I thank the Secretary-General for his twelfth report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to international peace and security (S/2021/98), as well as Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Assistant Secretary-General Coninx for their insightful briefings.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has continued to affect terrorism trends over the past six months. We note that the threat posed by ISIL and its followers is constantly evolving, as the group can quickly exploit existing and emerging vulnerabilities. In that context, terrorists and violent extremists have increased their online activities, thus targeting people who are spending more time in front of screens than ever before. Furthermore, terrorists have managed to forge new alliances with organized criminal groups and raise funds via cryptocurrency wallet addresses.

As the Secretary-General's report outlines, violent extremists and terrorists were able to increase their operations in the second part of 2020. These included high-profile attacks in Afghanistan, West Africa and Central Africa. Unfortunately, we also witnessed a number of inspired attacks by lone individuals in Europe, suggesting that online terrorist propaganda continues to lead to homegrown terrorism attacks outside the conflict zones.

Estonia notes that, despite the territorial defeat of ISIL in 2019, its sizeable remnants continue to be a cause for concern for Member States, and the threat is constantly evolving. Estonia is a proud member of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, and I reiterate Estonia's determination to continue the fight against ISIL in the framework of the international coalition.

There is no doubt that violent extremism and terrorism pose a threat to global peace and security and that only through close cooperation on the global, regional and national level can we successfully combat them. Estonia appreciates the growing cooperation among the United Nations and the European Union, Europol and Eurojust.

The United Nations has a central role to play in leading the global effort — from setting the standards to delivering technical assistance. Better coordination and cooperation should be continuously emphasized within the wide United Nations system. A One United Nations approach should be pursued as a standard.

Furthermore, it is essential that we engage meaningfully with civil society groups and the private sector. The voice of youth, women and religious and community leaders should be heard. A whole-of-society approach and prevention are more critical than ever in designing effective counter-terrorism policies, as well as in building cohesive societies that are resilient in the face of terrorism and radicalization.

Estonia condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. My country is convinced that States must ensure that all counter-terrorism measures comply with State obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law. Ignoring those principles can undermine counter-terrorism activities and lead to increased radicalization, fuelled by violence and a sense of impunity. We therefore also condemn all attempts to misuse the counter-terrorism agenda as a pretext for human rights violations.

Estonia is deeply concerned about the increasing misuse of counter-terrorism measures to silence human rights defenders, political opponents and members of religious or ethnic minorities.

Ensuring accountability and denying impunity is an essential part of countering terrorism. It is also vital in efforts to heal communities, restore trust and create conditions for sustainable peace. We note that COVID-19 poses a significant challenge to international legal cooperation. At the same time, it is worth highlighting that, despite the difficulties encountered, United Nations entities managed to continue many programmes, including supporting efforts by States to develop and implement comprehensive and tailored prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies.

Finally, despite the fragmentation of our efforts due to the pandemic, it is essential that our cooperation in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism continue and that we remain vigilant to adapt to new circumstances. In that context, Estonia wishes to underline its appreciation of the work of United Nations entities such as the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL and the United Nations Children's Fund — all of which have managed to adapt and continue to fulfil their mandates in these difficult times.

**Annex V****Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: English and French]

First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov and Ms. Michèle Coninsx for their briefings and their essential and coordinated work. I would also like to pay tribute today to the victims of terrorism.

The threat of Da'esh has not been extinguished. Quite the opposite has been clearly illustrated by what my colleagues have said. The terrorist organization is experiencing renewed activity in Syria, is trying to regain ground in Iraq and is uniting new affiliates, particularly in Africa. To eliminate this threat, it is absolutely necessary that we maintain our ability to put pressure on the military front. We are determined to wage this fight on all fronts, alongside our regional and international partners, through the Global Coalition against Da'esh and within the framework of the International Coalition for the Sahel.

But, as the briefers stressed, our response cannot be simply a security response. We need to address the root causes of conflict, extremism and terrorism. In Syria that requires a political solution, in accordance with the terms of resolution 2254 (2015); in Iraq it requires stabilization and reconstruction; in the Sahel it requires restoring the authority of the State, supporting local development and resolving tensions between communities. These are all an integral part of the response to the terrorist threat.

I would like to highlight several areas where we must intensify efforts.

First, as noted, we must dry up the resources of terrorist groups, in particular the growing use of cryptocurrencies in online funds. We call on all States to implement resolution 2462 (2019), and together we will explore new areas for action at the upcoming joint meeting of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), concerning counter-terrorism.

Secondly, we need to counter terrorist propaganda on social networks, which is a major echo chamber for jihadist groups. That development has only been amplified under the effect of the coronavirus disease. It will require the unification of a large coalition of actors — not only policymakers but also civil society and Internet companies. We call on all States to join the Christchurch Call to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online, which we launched with New Zealand.

In short, the protection of human rights is a sine qua non for effectively fighting terrorism. France will ensure that respect for international humanitarian law and human rights is fully taken into account in the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Regarding the humanitarian aspect, I would like to respond to the remarks made against the White Helmets during one of the statements, because they do absolutely essential work in the humanitarian field.

There can be no impunity for the crimes committed by Da'esh. All terrorists must be tried as near as possible to where their crimes were committed. That is where the evidence of their acts can be found and where victims can be granted reparations for the harm done to them. In Mali, we welcome the fact that 142 people have been tried since 2017, in particular thanks to the support provided by France, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and

many others to the Specialized Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime.

With regard to repatriation, unlike their parents, children have not chosen to join terrorism. That is why we repatriated orphaned and vulnerable unaccompanied minors when conditions allowed, taking into account the best interests of the child. I remind you that France does not have jurisdiction over the camps where those children are located and does not have effective control over those areas. Repatriation could therefore be carried out in a war zone only after extremely complex negotiations with the local authorities. But our efforts on behalf of children do not change France's steadfast position with regard to adult foreign terrorist fighters.

Lastly, we must work to strengthen the capacities of States to counter terrorism so that they can best take ownership of those challenges, which are central to their own security. That objective will be the focus of the N'Djamena summit on 15 and 16 February. Concerning Mozambique, the support of international and regional partners will be absolutely essential to help the authorities respond to the terrorist threat in Cabo Delgado.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate France's continued support for the United Nations in the fight against terrorism, which we will reaffirm by fully engaging in the discussions on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review.

## Annex VI

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurthi**

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), and Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), for their briefings on the twelfth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) to international peace and security (S/2021/98).

The Secretary-General's periodic report on ISIL is an important tool for Member States to reflect on the threat posed by ISIL and strategize a collective approach towards global terrorism. We appreciate the activities undertaken by various United Nations entities, including UNOCT and CTED, to help build the capacity of Member States to counter that threat. We also acknowledge the important role played by the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, under the chairmanship of Mr. Voronkov, in ensuring coordination and coherence among all the implementing agencies through its thematic working groups.

It is an undeniable fact that terrorism continues to pose the gravest threat to humankind. Terrorism not only grievously impacts human life but also uproots the very foundation of humanity. Let me take this opportunity to convey our sincere condolences to all countries, including our immediate neighbour, Afghanistan, which continues to suffer from cross-border and international terrorism.

The current report of the Secretary-General on ISIL reiterates the necessity for a forceful and decisive global fight against terrorism. The report makes it amply clear that, despite its territorial defeat, ISIL (Da'esh) activities are on the rise, and its presence and activities are affecting significant parts of Africa beyond its core area of operations in Syria and Iraq. The coronavirus disease pandemic has further resulted in terrorism getting a fillip across the world.

Easy access to new and emerging technologies, including drones, virtual currencies, encrypted communications and artificial intelligence, has enabled ISIL and other terrorist groups to adapt to the pandemic-affected world and exploit the current conditions to their advantage. Social media networks have also contributed to the radicalization and recruitment of young people. Those new methods have resulted in greater freedom and tactical autonomy for ISIL affiliates.

As a result, ISIL is gaining strength not only in Syria and Iraq, but also in Yemen, the Sahel, West Africa and the Central Africa region. Al-Qaida, the Haqqani Network, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba continue to flourish and operate with impunity in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The modus operandi of ISIL has also changed, as is evident from the lone-wolf attacks occurring in Europe. That changed and reinvigorated ISIL poses a new set of challenges to our collective efforts in our fight against ISIL and terrorism.

The Secretary-General's report also provides an account of the activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K), including the appointment of its new leader, Shahab al-Mujahid. He has close links with the proscribed Haqqani Network and earlier operated in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region as an Al-Qaida commander. It is essential that we do not lose sight of the ease with which the proscribed Haqqani Network and its supporters, especially with support from the Pakistani authorities, have worked with prominent terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaida, ISIL-K, et cetera, in South Asia.

In our view, the Secretary-General's report on ISIL should also cover activities of the proscribed terrorist entities under the ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions regime, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and other Pakistan-based terror groups, including Jaish-e-Mohammad, and front organizations that raise funds for their activities. The world is fully aware that such groups also perpetrate terrorist activities from safe havens in Pakistan, including through violent attacks in Afghanistan, which have disrupted the peace process. We are also witnessing the relocation of terror groups to Afghanistan, especially in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, across the Durand Line. To not name them in the report is doing a disservice, as it gives only a partial and biased view of the situation in the region.

For the United Nations system to effectively address the threats posed by terrorists, I would like to reiterate the urgent need to implement the eight-point action plan that India's External Affairs Minister, Mr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, proposed to the Security Council on 12 January (see S/2021/48, annex V). First, we must summon the political will, and should not allow terrorism to be justified or terrorists to be glorified. Second, there must be no double standards. Terrorists are terrorists. No distinction should be made as to whether they are good or bad. Third, no blocks or holds should be placed on listing requests without any reason. Fourth, we must discourage exclusivist thinking. Fifth, we must enlist and delist objectively, not for political or religious considerations. Sixth, we must recognize the linkage with organized crime. Seventh, we must support and strengthen the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Eighth, we must provide greater funding to the UNOCT.

It is therefore imperative to collectively build on those principles in ensuring that we are able to defeat the scourge of terrorism for good. We welcome the global programmes launched by UNOCT to assist Member States in building their capacities to prevent and counter terrorism, and we acknowledge the direct utility of the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme and the Global Programme against Money-Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism to prevent and detect the travel of foreign terrorists and the funding of terrorist entities, respectively. We also believe that enhanced United Nations coordination with the FATF would go a long way towards effectively countering terrorism. However, we ask UNOCT to tread carefully on efforts by countries to change the narrative on terrorism to suit their narrow ends and undermine our collective efforts.

We also attach importance to the role played by UNOCT in building the capacity of Member States both through its capacity-building arm, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, and through its work with other United Nations agencies in the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. India also contributed to the United Nations trust fund for counter-terrorism in order for UNOCT to implement capacity-building projects in East and Southern African countries on border management and countering the financing of terrorism.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support for counter-terrorism cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations. India has been at the forefront of global counter-terrorism efforts, has taken part in all major global initiatives against international terrorism and is a party to all United Nations sectoral conventions relating to terrorism.

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## Annex VII

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason**

I want to thank our two briefers this morning, Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Assistant Secretary-General Coninx, for their excellent briefings.

Acts of terrorism preoccupy and horrify all of us. We believe that it is absolutely critical that the Security Council address threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. What should unite all of us here is our determination to counter terrorism.

For Ireland, human rights must remain at the core of that response. Human rights violations can drive radicalization and contribute to the growth of terrorism and violent extremism. We believe all measures taken to combat terrorism should comply with international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international refugee law and the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. We are vigilant that the introduction of emergency measures by States to reduce the spread of the coronavirus disease does not compromise human rights, and we would welcome further elaboration on that specific issue in the next report of the Secretary-General.

We welcome the initiatives outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/98) to support and protect the rights of victims of terrorism by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), including ensuring justice. However, prosecuting terrorists for gender-based crimes, especially crimes of sexual and gender-based violence, clearly remains particularly challenging. That is an area where frankly, we clearly must do better.

Likewise, the trends that we see regarding female perpetrators of terrorist acts underline the need to incorporate a gender perspective into counter-terrorism law. Importantly, we also need to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in counter-terrorism processes.

I would also like to acknowledge the positive and, indeed, important role that young people can play as agents of change. They can play a role in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

We fully recognize the need to target the sources of terrorist funding. However, there is also a responsibility on all Member States to ensure that the measures adopted do not have a negative impact on the work of humanitarian and civil society actors as they do their work on the ground to support and assist the most vulnerable.

We remain very concerned at the continued high numbers of attacks against civilians by ISIL and affiliated groups, including across West Africa and the Sahel. We would welcome further reporting and further analysis of those differing and challenging environments, looking at the factors that underpin the growing relationships and linkages between ISIL and affiliated groups.

The surge in online propaganda during the pandemic represents a very worrying development. Terrorists, including ISIL, clearly and blatantly abuse the Internet and social media platforms to radicalize and recruit. They use them to promote hate, incite violence and finance their activities. A multi-stakeholder approach that includes Government, industry and civil society partners is instrumental in combating that abuse.

For its part, the European Union has made progress in the area of illegal content, including with legislation to address the dissemination of terrorist content online, which is now in the final stages of its adoption. In December 2020, the

European Commission proposed the Digital Services Act, which constitutes a comprehensive reform of the treatment of illegal content online. It includes measures setting out a clear and uniform set of due diligence obligations for online service providers, which will ensure the safety of users online. In addition to supporting European Union initiatives, Ireland intends to legislate for a robust regulatory framework to tackle the spread of illegal and harmful online content through a new online safety commissioner.

The Secretary-General's comprehensive report and the briefings that we received this morning signal the challenges we face. Conflict zones across Africa and the Middle East have seen a concerning resurgence of terrorist activity and, as our societies reopen after the pandemic, we will need greater vigilance to counter terrorism.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001) and the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, we believe that the most effective way to commemorate the anniversary is for the Council to ensure a United Nations counter-terrorism framework that is effective and grounded in human rights and international law.

## Annex VIII

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

Kenya appreciates the leadership of the United Kingdom in organizing this important open debate on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx, for briefing the Security Council on the twelfth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) to international peace and security (S/2021/98) and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States to counter that threat.

Kenya takes this opportunity to note a few issues from the report that are of concern with regard to the global threat posed by ISIL.

The impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the evolution of the threat of terrorism, including increased activity by terrorist networks, especially ISIL, so as to continue their online and offline propaganda machinery, will have grave repercussions.

The economic crises caused by the pandemic are making economic conditions tougher for the population and offering more opportunities for disenchantment and division. We observe that terrorists can exploit such conditions to spread their toxic ideology for recruitment and radicalization. In Africa, especially in conflict zones, Al-Qaida, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham and their affiliates, splinter groups and copycats are expanding recruitment and radicalization into violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

We are concerned by a resurgent Al-Shabaab, which is adapting to the COVID-19 crisis by establishing phony humanitarian facilities to recruit and radicalize in the guise of distributing food and other aid items in Somalia. The activities of terror groups like Al-Shabaab have surged due to increased avenues for funding, including illegal taxation, extortion and criminal activity and remittances from abroad. In the light of those and other challenges identified in the report, Kenya would like to draw on its experience to propose the following.

We must address terrorism financing and radicalization networks regionally and globally by tightening financial regulations and establishing strong public financial management systems. We must also enhance national mechanisms for freezing the assets of individuals accused of engaging in terrorist activities.

We must ensure that the Council's efforts to support ceasefires, political negotiations, elections and reconciliation must take steps — not only military — to protect the process from those groups. The Council must understand that their violence advances an ideological and political view that can spread and destroy peace, sometimes by pretending to go along with a peace process.

Countries need to learn from one another, particularly countries that share many features. South-South cooperation is critical and can be promoted by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in Kenya, which we believe should receive every support.

We must also increase counter-terrorism capacity-building and funding to African States to address the spectre of expanding ISIL affiliates in the continent.

We must promote counter-narratives to curb the spread of terrorist ideology. Amid the COVID-19 environment, security agencies need to stay alert to the

continuing threat posed by ISIL and maintain constant monitoring of online and offline chat rooms. We therefore call on more countries and companies to adopt the Christchurch Call to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

Finally, Kenya urges the international community to remain vigilant against terrorism inspired by Al-Qaida and ISIL. These groups are like an ominous shadow looming over the entire world and over our collective aspiration to live under a rules-based order. They intend nothing less than the destruction of that order. Their ability to project their worldview and their operational ability to exploit national and local rifts should never be underestimated.

Any attempt to treat them as normal political actors is a dangerous misperception of their deep commitment to their cause and their embrace of temporary ceasefires to advance their positions. Any such attempt, which Kenya considers very ill-advised, should be attempted when counter-terrorism is ascendant. Even then, there should be strict red lines that never cede ground on the equality and freedom of women, freedom of speech and media and freedom of religion between and within religions. Moreover, tough sanctions should be maintained until there is certainty that they have ceased their military and ideological operations.

The Security Council led the world after 9/11 by insisting that all countries adopt strict counter-terrorism approaches. It should stick by that mission, which is nowhere near complete, instead of inadvertently creating dangerous grey areas where doubt can be cast on the global stance against terrorism.

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**Annex IX****Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

We thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, for their briefings.

Mexico takes this opportunity to make the following comments in the light of the twelfth report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/98) on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to international peace and security, and will focus its intervention on four aspects.

First, on the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic on efforts to address terrorism, it is indeed worrisome that terrorist groups are taking advantage of the crisis generated by the pandemic to reinforce the spread of their hate messages online. We must ensure that counter-terrorism efforts do not encroach on or limit the space that should be occupied by public health authorities. We share the Secretary-General's concern that the long-term economic and social effects of the pandemic will undermine efforts to address terrorism and agree with his assessment that strategies to prevent and address its structural causes must be strengthened.

Secondly, we must address the humanitarian situation in detention centres in conflict zones, as well as the repatriation of foreign fighters. The situation in detention centres where ISIL family members, including foreign fighters, are held is also of concern. Those people there are being denied fundamental human rights, including protection, access to health services, shelter, water, sanitation and education — a situation that is exacerbated by the constraints on humanitarian assistance caused by the pandemic. It is no small matter, for example, that 80 per cent of the people in Al-Hol, in Syria, are women and children.

We join the call issued by United Nations experts, on 8 February, to 57 States to speed up efforts to repatriate their nationals, in full compliance with international human rights law, and to facilitate their full psychosocial reintegration, with special attention to the gender-based trauma suffered by women and girls.

Thirdly, we need criminal justice and accountability for crimes and gender-based violence perpetrated by terrorists. We note with great concern that the report indicates that such crimes, especially those of sexual violence, remain unprosecuted and unpunished. Given the profound impact those criminal acts have on individuals and on the social fabric, we believe this should be a priority in counter-terrorism strategies.

This, in turn, reinforces the need for a comprehensive gender perspective. In that regard, we congratulate UNESCO on the launch of the project on the prevention of violent extremism through education, with a focus on the social constructs of masculinity and femininity. We hope that this effort can be taken forward globally.

Finally, we must remain vigilant against terrorist financing. Preventing the financing of terrorist groups remains key to curtailing their efforts. However, we must ensure that measures taken to that end do not have a negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. There is an urgent need to deepen the dialogue among Member States, the various entities of the United Nations system, civil society and private actors, especially financial institutions, in order to find practical solutions to the challenges on the ground. The twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001) provides an opportunity to incorporate that dimension and

to launch a new phase in the fight against the financing of terrorism. It should be stressed that the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, as the main legal instrument in force in this field, which enjoys almost universal participation, should be the cornerstone of our efforts.

**Annex X****Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate. I would also like to thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov and Ms. Michèle Coninsx for the thoroughness of their briefings. I also thank the Secretariat for the preparation of the twelfth report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/98) on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts and the support that the United Nations provides to Member States to help them better address those threats.

My delegation welcomes the positive developments observed in 2020 in the fight against terrorism, which have resulted in the neutralization of several senior commanders of terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria and Africa. We owe those successes both to the offensive strikes carried out by various international counter-terrorist military coalitions and the softer actions of the relevant United Nations entities aimed at strengthening the capacity of Member States to implement their strategies for the prevention and suppression of terrorist acts, in accordance with international law and conventions.

Despite those victories, we remain concerned about the resilience and adaptability of the Islamic State organization, which increased its efforts throughout 2020 to make timely use of the vulnerabilities resulting from the global health crisis of the coronavirus disease pandemic in order to reorganize and rebuild its external operational capacity, lost since the defeat of its last stronghold in Syria, in March 2019.

To achieve that, the organization relies on dormant cells and affiliated groups in several parts of the world, including the African continent. In order to carry out their dirty work, the terrorists take advantage of the weak defence systems of African countries, the precariousness of their populations and the porous nature of their borders. Intercommunal conflicts and political instability in these countries are also aggravating factors.

In the Sahel, for example, in spite of offensive strikes carried out by the forces of the region and their partners, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara continues to threaten the peace of the populations living in proximity to the shared borders of the three countries — Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso. As for the Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province groups, they still maintain a disruptive capacity and represent the main threats in the Lake Chad basin region.

In the eastern part of the continent, Al-Shabaab, the Islamic State subsidiary in Somalia, maintains a connection with affiliates of the terrorist group the Islamic State Central Africa Province, which continues to carry out deadly attacks against civilians and military personnel in Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, most recently, on 14 October, in Tanzania.

Furthermore, we note that the socioeconomic impact of the coronavirus pandemic in African countries could, in the medium- or long-term, aggravate the existing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorist ideologies and widen their recruitment ground. It is therefore important that the international community take all the necessary measures to support the efforts of African States to prevent terrorists from taking advantage of social fractures and other vulnerabilities exacerbated by the pandemic.

The fight against terrorism is not only a matter for the military. It also requires States to take into account other equally important measures. Those measures may target, for example, behaviour and activities that may facilitate the financing of terrorism, such as corruption and money laundering, the freezing of terrorist assets, the development of deradicalization programmes and projects for the rehabilitation or social reintegration of former terrorist detainees and the control of the Internet to prevent its use for terrorist purposes.

I would like to commend the outstanding commitment of all relevant United Nations entities, particularly the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which have been able to find the necessary alternative mechanisms despite these difficult times, thereby enabling them to ensure the continuity of United Nations support for the efforts of Member States through innovative procedures, distance evaluation, online training and the organization of virtual events.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my country's conviction that the fight against terrorism requires the commitment of all. The international community has a duty to keep its commitment and solidarity alive in the face of this global threat. States must preserve the momentum that made it possible to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, because only in this way can the same victory be won in the various regions of the world that have been hard hit by this terrible scourge.

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## Annex XI

### **Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

Let me start by thanking the briefers for their presentations, and the Secretary-General for his highly informative report (S/2021/98). Norway remains determined to continue the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) with our international partners in the Global Coalition against Da'esh. We also continue to support the Organization's leading role on preventing and countering all forms of terrorism.

We remain concerned about ISIL's continued foothold in Syria and Iraq and its capacity to recruit followers and plan and conduct terrorist attacks. We strongly condemn the suicide attack in Baghdad on 21 January, for which ISIL claimed responsibility.

We are equally concerned to see that ISIL and affiliated groups — or groups driven by the same ideology — continue to spread around the world, including in the Sahel, West Africa, and the Lake Chad region. These groups also maintain a presence in and around Afghanistan, which poses a threat to regional peace and stability. Experience has repeatedly shown that ISIL and affiliated groups exploit existing conflicts and vulnerabilities in States and within populations, thereby causing a vicious cycle of further destabilization. Going forward, we need to work preventively and in a comprehensive manner. I wish to highlight the following points.

First, we need to address the root causes of radicalization, including factors leading to grievances, marginalization, exclusion and injustice. Secondly, we must address the conflicts and complex vulnerable security situations that allow terrorist organizations to establish a presence. Thirdly, as an underlying driver for instability and conflict, climate change is an area of growing concern in many parts of the world and should be factored into our responses.

The increasing trend of online radicalization to all forms of violent extremism is highly worrisome. It has likely been exacerbated by a surge in online propaganda during the pandemic. Action is urgently needed, including through a whole-of-society approach. The inclusion and support of private technology companies will be key. We need to prevent ISIL and other terrorist groups from raising funds, including through new methods such as crowdfunding and the use of cryptocurrencies or virtual assets.

Our approaches to counter-terrorism must be comprehensive. Women's efforts to promote prevention, stabilization and deradicalization at all levels of society needs to be at the forefront of our action plans. Counter-terrorism efforts cannot be an excuse to reduce civic space or humanitarian access. We cannot overemphasize that States' national security practices must comply with international law, including respecting and protecting human rights. Furthermore, sexual and gender-based violence is too often used as a weapon of war and a tactic of terrorism. It is essential to provide health services to survivors, including sexual and reproductive services and psychosocial support.

Evidence frequently shows that torture leads to false confessions, which result in false information. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the gathering of counter-terrorism intelligence take place in a non-coercive, human rights-compliant manner. Norway is a long-standing supporter of developing manuals and training on that method, including equipping practitioners in the security sector with the best tools to ensure they can effectively do their jobs. The sharing of information through

international police and security cooperation, such as INTERPOL's databases, is also important.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to the burials that took place this week of the 103 members of the Yazidi community killed by ISIL. The images of lines of coffins and grieving families, including Nadia Murad, stand as a very real reminder of what is at stake in our international fight against terror, of the importance of accountability and of the weight of our words and the commitments we have made in this forum today.

**Annex XII****Statement by Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

Today, on 10 February, Russia marks Diplomats' Day — our professional holiday. This is not an invitation to congratulate ourselves, however. On the contrary, I would like to congratulate Under-Secretary-General Voronkov. Before assuming his office, he was a prominent Russian diplomat, and I would extend my warmest wishes to him.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Assistant Secretary-General Coninx for their effective leadership of their respective entities in monitoring terrorists and providing counter-terrorism assistance to States in the complicated context of today's world. Terrorists make use of the global pandemic and its related socioeconomic perturbations to win new adherents. They actively use the Internet for these purposes. The leaders of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are using web resources to manage ISIL cells and combat units and promote their narrative.

We agree with Secretary-General's assessments of the threat posed by ISIL. The report before us (S/2021/98) clearly demonstrates that this terrorist organization is retaining its positions in several of the world's regions. The ISIL threat is gaining momentum in the Sahelo-Saharan-Saharan zone: in the south-east of Mali, the northern areas of Burkina Faso and the western regions of the Niger. The so-called Islamic State in the Greater Sahara proceeds with the goal of creating an Islamic "caliphate". With militants gaining strongholds in Central Africa, there remains a threat that they might penetrate countries of the Southern African region. A rather complicated situation is unfolding in Mozambique, where militia leaders seek to seize gas fields to ensure a source of sustainable financing.

ISIL suffered a considerable defeat in Syria. However, the terrorist threat remains in the country, owing, first of all, to the presence of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, a group that counts among its members approximately 15,000 militants, and its main forces are concentrated in Idlib, western Aleppo and north-east Latakia. Hurras Al-Din, a group that counts among its adherents about 9,000 militants, at least half of whom are foreign terrorist fighters from the Middle East and North Africa, also poses a serious threat to Syria.

Speaking of Syria, the problem of repatriating foreign terrorist fighters and their family members, especially minor children, has grown to its fullest expression. Unfortunately, a number of these fighters' countries of origin prefer to turn a blind eye to the issue. A vivid example of this is the problem of Al-Hol camp, which for several years now has been mentioned in one report of the Secretary-General after another. In order to solve the problem of Al-Hol camp, States whose nationals are in the camp must establish stable interaction with Syria's legitimate authorities.

Russia is closely cooperating with the authorities of Syria and Iraq to establish the whereabouts of Russian minors there and ensure that they get back home. At the end of December 2020, a humanitarian operation repatriated 19 children, whose ages ranged from 3 to 15. Since December 2018, 274 children have returned to Russia from conflict zones: 122 from Iraq and 152 from Syria. At present, documents have been prepared for another 96 children now living in refugee camps in Syria. We call on States to make every effort to save the children from involvement in the cycle of violence perpetrated by terrorists.

It is no less important for there to be full-fledged cooperation in holding foreign terrorist fighters accountable. In the first instance, there must be cooperation with the States on whose territory terrorist crimes have been committed. Instead, we are witnessing attempts by some States to create quasi-legal mechanisms to cooperate with individuals and entities that are not authorized to administer justice.

We cannot fail to mention the problem of pseudo-humanitarian organizations created by Western special services. Instead of pursuing their proclaimed noble goals, they are used for provocation and the incitement of conflicts. The White Helmets, who are closely linked to terrorists, mainly those from Jabhat Al-Nusra, are a sad example of this phenomenon. The financing of that organization has not stopped. Remarkably, after the defeat of ISIL in Syria, members of the White Helmets were transferred to neighbouring countries, with Western sponsors promising to transport them. But apparently things got bogged down. Now there is some concern that these so-called humanitarians are inspiring terrorist activity in their new locations.

ISIL positions in Afghanistan are still strong, which is why the terrorist and drug threats are spreading from Afghanistan to other countries in the region and beyond. Despite the efforts of national enforcement authorities, which have been taken with the help and direct participation of a foreign military contingent, there are no signs of stabilization of the situation at this time.

Speaking of countering terrorism in Afghanistan, we should recall the crimes committed there by foreign military contingents and the personnel of private military entities. Those crimes must be investigated and the guilty held accountable.

In conclusion, we would like to say that the fight against ISIL is yielding results. While today we cannot honestly speak of ISIL creating a terrorist caliphate, the group is still striving to adapt to the changing environment and poses a real threat. Terrorists benefit from a lack of unity among States, and from those States' contradictions. We should not forget that ISIL evolved from the illegitimate use of force on a territory of a foreign State and illegal cross-border arms deliveries. States must stay united, cooperate under the coordination of the United Nations and cast aside their disagreements if they are to counter ISIL in accordance with their obligations set forth in resolutions of the Security Council and international conventions.

Furthermore, United Nations mechanisms and related technical assistance programmes must share tasks to consolidate progress in countering ISIL. Accordingly, the report of the Secretary-General highlights the importance of human rights and gender aspects in United Nations programmes and initiatives. While these aspects are indeed important, the balanced approaches set forth in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy needs to be preserved.

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**Annex XIII****Statement by the Second Deputy Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Halimah DeShong**

I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Assistant Secretary-General Coninx for their informative briefings. Their ongoing endeavours to ensure a balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council are critical to our efforts aimed at maintaining international peace and security.

The transnational threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups demands urgent attention. In order to mitigate and counter this looming threat, States Members of the United Nations and the international community must enhance coordination and adapt tools to properly confront the challenges of today.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains deeply concerned about the ever-evolving threat of ISIL's activities in different regions of the world, from the Middle East and Africa to Europe and Asia. In that regard, effective international cooperation in gathering and sharing information and intelligence with respect to emerging threats is required to better anticipate changes and prepare responses. To that end, we commend the joint efforts of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate in facilitating the delivery of counter-terrorism-related technical assistance to Member States, in accordance with resolution 2395 (2017).

It is of paramount importance for Member States to collectively address the ongoing challenges presented by foreign terrorist fighters. In addressing the complex issues related to these fighters, Member States must coordinate and build on efforts undertaken at the national, regional and international level, in accordance with international law, particularly human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/98) reflects, a significant number of children affiliated with ISIL have been detained in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic and in Iraq. We reaffirm our support for those Member States involved in the rehabilitation and reintegration of repatriated children and urge States to share good practices and lessons learned from the successful repatriation of their nationals from core conflict zones.

More remains to be done to better address terrorist financing. The coronavirus disease pandemic has compounded persistent difficulties faced by Member States in countering the financing of terrorism, bringing new challenges relating, inter alia, to increased reliance on online transactions and reduced direct contact with customers. It is our firm belief that compliance with counter-terrorism provisions can be addressed through better regulation. Equally, initiatives to combat the financing of terrorism must be designed in such a way as to bolster, rather than undermine, legitimate socioeconomic activity. De-risking in the financial sector should be grounded in mutual collaborative agreements that effectively address terrorist financing, while at the same time protecting the banking industries in affected countries against negative economic pressures.

Let me conclude by reiterating the obligation of the Security Council as the global body charged with maintaining international peace and security. Our mission should be to counter ISIL and the broader threat of terrorism by working closely with partners to keep the world safe, blocking ISIL funds in a sensible and targeted way and mitigating the effects of terrorist propaganda on people around the globe. We must remain united and effective in our efforts aimed at combating the scourge of violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

**Annex XIV****Statement by the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations**

[Original: Arabic]

I would like to thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Head of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, for their comprehensive briefings.

Today, as we discuss a new report (S/2021/98) on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the global situation remains dire as a result of the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has swept every country and overshadowed various aspects of international peace and security, including the issue of terrorism.

As the repercussions of the pandemic persist, the terrorist threat has grown around the world, particularly in conflict zones. ISIL, despite its military defeat in Iraq and Syria, is still trying to exploit the security and health situations to reorganize its ranks, restore its capabilities on the ground and spread terrorist propaganda, especially online.

There is no doubt that the impact of the pandemic will extend to areas not stricken by conflict as well, given the medium- and long-term economic and social implications of COVID-19, which, if not addressed, will help to exacerbate the conditions that fuel terrorism and violent extremism.

The financing of terrorism remains a major concern, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General. ISIL and Al-Qaida possess significant cash resources, especially since terrorist organizations have come to rely on organized criminal activity, including trafficking in persons and drugs, illegal trafficking in oil resources, weapons, kidnappings, extortion and other criminal acts.

In that regard, the Security Council, acting in particular through the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015,) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, should devote more attention to, and follow up on, this issue, as well as continue to help States resolve the problems they face in combating the financing of terrorism, particularly with respect to the use of modern technologies by terrorists, the remittance system, digital and encrypted currencies and informal financial services providers.

Tunisia is deeply concerned about the growth of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, particularly in West Africa and the Sahel region, where terrorist groups are taking advantage of conflicts and fragile social, economic and security conditions to expand their activities in the region. Sending terrorists and mercenaries into conflict zones has helped to ignite and prolong conflicts, complicating the peacebuilding process.

In that context, Tunisia follows with grave concern reports that there are numerous terrorist fighters in Libya, which will pose an additional threat to the security of neighbouring countries and the Sahel region. Tunisia welcomes the road map adopted by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum in Tunis. We hope that the road map will help end the conflict, thereby restoring security and stability and eradicating terrorism in the region. We also look forward to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. That includes ensuring the departure of all foreign fighters and mercenaries from Libya.

Tunisia is equally concerned about the growth of terrorism perpetrated by far-right groups, whose threats are increasing more rapidly than ever before. Those groups, in turn, seek to exploit the pandemic to spread conspiracy theories and racist ideology based on xenophobia and hatred of minorities.

Throughout its democratic transition, Tunisia has worked to bring its national legislation into line with the international legal framework, including the relevant Security Council resolutions, in order to ensure that the fight against terrorism is effective and fully compliant with the principles of human rights and that fundamental freedoms are protected. Moreover, my country attaches the utmost importance to promoting international and multilateral cooperation, partnering with civil society and strengthening the role of youth and women. Tunisia sought to make those priorities the focus of the high-level meeting that the Security Council convened in January (see S/2021/48) to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001) and the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

In that context, I welcome the adoption by the Council of the presidential statement (S/2021/PRST/1) in which it reaffirmed its steadfast engagement in strengthening the unified and coordinated international response to the scourge of terrorism, particularly by building the capacity of States, addressing the underlying conditions conducive to violent extremism and terrorism, adopting a participatory approach and respecting international human rights standards, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

Lastly, Tunisia stands ready to continue working this year, on during which counter-terrorism will take centre stage, with all relevant States, United Nations entities and various influential actors in important upcoming activities, such as the review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the renewal of the mandates of both the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. We hope that will contribute to strengthening multilateral cooperation and achieving our collective goal of a world free of terrorism.

## **Annex XV**

### **Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Jonathan Allen**

I join others in condemning this morning's attack on the 26 United Nations peacekeepers from Togo serving in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. We wish all those injured a swift and complete recovery.

As the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/98) underscores, Da'esh continues to pose a global threat. Despite territorial losses, the group remains able to inflict deadly harm in Syria and Iraq. We are concerned particularly by the camps for internally displaced persons highlighted in the report. The United Kingdom facilitates the return of unaccompanied or orphaned children on a case-by-case basis and subject to national security concerns. But those who have fought for or supported Da'esh should face justice for their crimes in the most appropriate jurisdiction, often where those crimes were committed.

Further afield, we are concerned about Da'esh's presence worldwide, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Its online recruitment and incitement must also be tackled. The United Kingdom remains an active member of the Global Coalition against Daesh. We co-lead coalition efforts to tackle the propaganda threat.

At the United Nations level, the United Kingdom will continue to advocate for increasing focus on preventing terrorists' misuse of the Internet and aviation security, as well as emerging threats beyond Da'esh such as right-wing terrorism. We will also emphasize the need to protect and promote human rights and the rule of law while countering terrorism, and we will prioritize prevention and whole-of-society approaches.

I want to conclude by associating myself with the comments made by the representative of France in defence of the White Helmets. We are used to hearing these slurs in our Syria debates and have responded in those meetings. It is rather sad to hear it raised in a serious debate on counter-terrorism.

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**Annex XVI****Statement by the Acting Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs of the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations, Jeffrey DeLaurentis**

I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Assistant-Secretary-General Coninx for their briefings and thank the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities for their efforts on the report (S/2021/98).

Under President Biden, the United States is committed to working with the Global Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) to ensure that that terrorist group is defeated on a lasting and comprehensive basis.

ISIS remains a serious threat. The group exploits instability in Iraq and Syria, demonstrates intent to execute attacks abroad and continues to inspire terrorist attacks from sub-Saharan Africa to the Asia-Pacific theatre. Preventing a resurgence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, as well as by its affiliates and networks beyond the Middle East, remains a priority of the United States Government along with our partners and allies in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

Since the fall of the physical caliphate in Iraq and Syria, the threat posed by ISIS and its affiliates has continued to evolve, and as an international community we must continually adapt our understanding of the threat and our efforts to combat it.

The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS remains focused on eradicating ISIS through four main, non-military lines of effort: counter-financing; counter-messaging; detention, repatriation and accountability for crimes and abuses of foreign terrorist fighters; and stabilization of areas liberated from ISIS.

We continue to monitor the alarming situation of the tens of thousands of suspected foreign terrorist fighters remaining in conflict zones. We watch with concern as women and children languish in camps in dire conditions with little access to education, increasing the potential for their radicalization. The global threat from ISIS will grow if the international community does not repatriate their citizens. We encourage the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the 1267 Monitoring Team to closely monitor that threat and to continue to guide the United Nations Office of Counter-terrorism's prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration initiative.

Beyond being the best option from a security standpoint, repatriation is also simply the right thing to do. It is estimated that 90 per cent of children in the camps are under 12 and 50 per cent under 5. They have limited access to food, medical care, clean water and other basic services. Education is almost non-existent. They cannot possibly live up to their potential under those conditions.

Beyond conflict zones, there is a surge in the threat posed by ISIS affiliates around the world, especially on the African continent. It is alarming but not unexpected to see those affiliates across Africa working together. That poses a danger to us all.

We look forward to working with our partners in the 1267 Committee to continue tackling that changing threat. The Committee has already designated six ISIS affiliates operating in Africa, the Middle East and Central and East Asia. We hope to see further affiliates, including more African affiliates, designated in the coming months.

While the world rallies to respond to the serious challenges posed by the coronavirus disease, terrorists are exploiting the pandemic to disseminate disinformation to garner support for their causes and advance their agendas. Terror groups such as ISIS are adapting their messages to undermine confidence in Government, threaten legitimate governance and provoke violence.

We must continue to work together to fight against those threats and defeat ISIS and its affiliates once and for all.

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**Annex XVII****Statement by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Pham Hai Anh**

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Assistant-Secretary-General Coninx for their informative briefings.

We highly appreciate the Secretary-General's twelfth strategic report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) to international peace and security (S/2021/98), which presents new findings in the development of the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh).

We take note of some positive developments in the past six months. However, it is concerning that the threats posed by ISIL have increased and are on the rise. In conflict zones, the socioeconomic fallout of the pandemic could exacerbate conditions conducive to terrorism, including inequality, inequity, marginalization and tension. These can be exploited by ISIL and its affiliates, which count on a resurgence.

We call on the international community to remain vigilant at all times. We must use every means to prevent terrorists from exploiting the vulnerabilities resulting from the global health crisis such as by colluding with organized crime or raising funds through use of cryptocurrency. Terrorists' use of the Internet for propaganda and radicalization remains an acute challenge that must be fully tackled, particularly as people are spending more time at home and online and experiencing tremendous hardship as a result of the pandemic.

Terrorism is the common scourge of all humankind. Solidarity and cooperation are our most effective response. The Council must remain firmly committed to detecting and averting new threats of international terrorism. International cooperation and technical assistance are crucial in enhancing national capacity to monitor terrorists' movements, detect and respond to imminent attacks, prevent their recruitment and financing, and counter terrorist narratives.

We commend the efforts of the relevant United Nations entities to maintain business continuity and conduct regular dialogue with Member States. We welcome initiatives by CTED and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to assist Member States in countering terrorism financing in full compliance with international law, keeping up with the increased reliance globally on online transactions.

Thousands of ISIL fighters, including foreign terrorist fighters, and their family members remain in detention facilities in Iraq and Syria. We take note of the alarm at and urgency regarding their unsustainable situation and the potential security threats. The risks of escape from those facilities or disorder in the midst of the coronavirus disease outbreak deserve prompt and effective action.

Our response and treatment of ISIL fighters and their family members must be based on the common standards of international law and in accordance with domestic laws. We encourage Member States and international organizations to enhance the sharing of best practices in the prosecution, repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation of foreign terrorist fighters and their dependants, as appropriate, while ensuring the best interests of the child wherever children are concerned.

Last but not least, terrorism can be rooted out only when dealt with holistically. Comprehensive strategies to address its underlying causes, build balanced and cohesive societies that are resilient to terrorism and radicalization, promote sustainable socioeconomic development and a culture of peace and tolerance, and promote national reconciliation should be advanced. A whole-of-society approach involving all actors, including non-governmental organizations, private actors and technology companies continues to be relevant.

In conclusion, Viet Nam maintains its firm position of rejecting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We will continue to actively engage in advancing the global fight against terrorism on the basis of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and our common values.

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