

## BLUE SKY IV: CLOUDS DISPERSING?

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An independent analysis of UN counterterrorism efforts in advance of the sixth review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2018

By **Alistair Millar**

May 2018



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Alistair Millar is the Howard S. Brembeck Fellow and serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Global Center on Cooperative Security, which he founded in 2004. He is also President of the Fourth Freedom Forum and an adjunct professor at The George Washington University.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Center, its advisory council, or the donor governments.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Acronyms

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Introduction

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Adapting to Change

Mainstreaming a Rights-Based Approach in Practice

Counterterrorism, Preventing Violent Extremism,  
and Development

Internal and External Coordination and  
Cooperation in Strategy Implementation

Measuring and Evaluating Impact

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Recommendations

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## ACRONYMS

CTC	Counter-Terrorism Committee (UN Security Council)
CTED	Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UN Security Council)
CTITF	UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force
CVE	countering violent extremism
FTF	foreign terrorist fighter
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
NGO	nongovernmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance (OECD)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
PVE	preventing violent extremism
UN	United Nations
UNCCT	UN Counter-Terrorism Centre
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNOCT	UN Office of Counter-Terrorism
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime

## INTRODUCTION

This independent report and its recommendations focus on ways to improve the development, coordination, delivery, and impact of UN efforts in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism (PVE). In light of the changes to the threat environment and alterations made to the UN architecture, this report also looks at what can be done to ensure that the sixth review of the *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy* can be used to assess more systematically the effectiveness of UN efforts to support Strategy implementation at headquarters, on the ground, and, importantly, between the two.<sup>1</sup> Now, as this report explains, plans must be made and groundwork must be laid during the sixth review to ensure that the seventh review, in 2020, and subsequent reviews can more rigorously take stock of the progress made by member states and the United Nations.

Building on previous analyses by the Global Center on Cooperative Security of UN counterterrorism efforts,<sup>2</sup> this report draws from a variety of sources, including interviews, consultations, anonymous survey data, and an off-the-record, two-day discussion with 40 UN representatives, government officials, and independent experts during a retreat convened on 7–8 March 2018 in Glen Cove, New York.

The analysis is based on five core questions.

- 1 Since the fifth Strategy review, in 2016, what has changed in terms of the nature of the threat and UN efforts to prevent and respond to it?
- 2 What efforts are being undertaken to ensure that measures to prevent and counter terrorism are compliant with human rights as articulated in the Strategy?
- 3 What practical steps are being taken by counterterrorism and PVE actors to enhance and sustain their roles and partnerships to address the nexus of PVE and development?
- 4 What steps can be taken to improve coordination and increase transparency and communication within the UN system on counterterrorism and PVE priorities and activities?
- 5 How can indicators and a more systematic monitoring and evaluation framework be put in place to structurally and effectively measure UN counterterrorism and PVE efforts and implementation of the Strategy?<sup>3</sup>

1 UN General Assembly, *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, A/RES/60/288, 20 September 2006 (adopted 8 September 2006) (hereinafter UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy).

2 Alistair Millar and Naureen Chowdhury Fink, “Blue Sky III: Taking UN Counterterrorism Efforts in the Next Decade From Plans to Action,” Global Center on Cooperative Security, September 2016, [http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Blue-Sky-III\\_low-res.pdf](http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Blue-Sky-III_low-res.pdf); Naureen Chowdhury Fink et al., “Blue Sky II: Progress and Opportunities in Implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” Global Center, April 2014, <http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Blue-Sky-II-Low-Res.pdf>; James Cockayne et al., “Reshaping United Nations Counterterrorism Efforts: Blue-Sky Thinking for Global Counterterrorism Cooperation 10 Years After 9/11,” Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 2012, [http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Reshaping\\_UNCTEfforts\\_Blue-Sky-Thinking.pdf](http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Reshaping_UNCTEfforts_Blue-Sky-Thinking.pdf).

3 This report uses “counterterrorism and PVE efforts” as the United Nations does, to represent the gamut of measures undertaken across the Strategy. Distinctions between counterterrorism and PVE, which have been at the center of debate, are not made. The quest for a universally accepted legal definition of terrorism remains elusive, and as the previous Secretary-General’s plan of action to prevent violent extremism noted, “[V]iolent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition.” UN General Assembly, *Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism*, A/RES/71/151, 20 December 2016; UN General Assembly, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/70/674, 24 December 2015, para. 2.



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UN General Assembly briefing on implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy  
22 February 2017  
UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

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## ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006, the Strategy advanced a comprehensive approach to terrorism that combined preventive and responsive measures, focusing on the conditions conducive to terrorism (Pillar I), preventing and combating terrorism (Pillar II), enhancing the capacity of the United Nations and member states (Pillar III), and ensuring human rights and the rule of law (Pillar IV). Given the changing nature of the threat and member state priorities, the General Assembly reviews the Strategy every two years.

There have been significant changes at the United Nations since the fifth review of the Strategy, in 2016. The United Nations is under new leadership. Secretary-General António Guterres has made his aims clear: “[P]reventing conflict and sustainable development is our first line of defence against terrorism.”<sup>4</sup> As a matter of priority, the Secretary-General created the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and appointed Vladimir Ivanovich Voronkov as the first Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism—an important and long-awaited reform.<sup>5</sup> Making this ever-expanding file the responsibility of a specialized Under-Secretary-General instead of including it in the already heavy workload of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs should give counterterrorism and PVE efforts the dedicated attention they deserve in the United Nations. The new UN counterterrorism and PVE architecture should be viewed as the beginning rather than the end of a process of improving coordination and enhancing efforts to implement the Strategy across all four pillars, in order to make its actions and agencies in these areas more effective and fit for purpose.

The Secretary-General has many positive developments on which to build. Practical research by the UN

Development Programme (UNDP) on the drivers of violent extremism in Africa provides one good example.<sup>6</sup> Another encouraging development is the elaboration of national action plans at the country and regional levels supported by the UNDP Global Programme and its field offices alongside partners.<sup>7</sup> A host of projects undertaken by the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) also address many of the key issues that require attention and increased capacity, including efforts to mainstream gender and promote practical South-South cooperation on counterterrorism and PVE activities.<sup>8</sup> The same applies to projects undertaken by several of the 38 UN entities of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF).

Yet, the Secretary-General has inherited some challenges that he must overcome before his broader focus on prevention is fully integrated and mainstreamed into UN work on counterterrorism. The most obvious difficulty centers on the previous Secretary-General’s PVE plan of action. Several interlocutors consulted for this report noted that the plan was hurried to completion without sufficient attention to the need for briefings and consensus building along the way. The public record of the debate surrounding the plan and subsequent comments from member states reveal that the process opened fissures that were not apparent when the Strategy was unanimously adopted.<sup>9</sup> In order for the Secretary-General’s vision of broad-based prevention to become an enduring part of the UN edifice, these divergences will need to be properly attended. Many commentators consulted for this report are hopeful that the Secretary-General’s attention to this topic, his focus on prevention, and his desire to include prevention in his larger peace and security reform agenda may lead to more effective and sustainable actions.

4 António Guterres, “Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights: Winning the Fight While Upholding Our Values” (speech, SOAS University of London, 16 November 2017), <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-11-16/speech-soas-university-london-counter-terrorism>.

5 Previous Blue Sky reports have called for changes to the UN counterterrorism structure. For the most comprehensive approach, see Millar and Fink, “Blue Sky III,” pp. 17–21.

6 UNDP, *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, 2017, <http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf>.

7 UNDP, “UNDP and Hedayah Team Up to Strengthen Collaboration in Preventing Violent Extremism,” 22 September 2017, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2017/09/22/undp-and-the-international-centre-of-excellence-for-counterterrorism-violent-extremism-hedayah-team-up-to-strengthen-collaboration-in-preventing-violent-extremism.html>.

8 These activities among many others are highlighted in the UNCCT’s quarterly reports (on file with the author).

9 UN Department of Public Information, “General Assembly Decides to Take More Time in Considering Secretary-General’s Proposed Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism,” GA/11760, 12 February 2016, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/ga11760.doc.htm>.

In light of the new architectural reform, the CTITF and UNCCT have been moved into the UNOCT. Several interlocutors have noted that there are positive signs that the counterterrorism and PVE agenda is being elevated internally through the Under-Secretary-General's participation in the Secretary-General's Senior Management Group and the establishment of the Secretary-General's High-Level PVE Action Group, which is supported by the UNOCT. Furthermore, there is a range of capacity-building work being undertaken by the United Nations on this topic; the CTITF's thematic working group on PVE, established in response to the resolution on the fourth review of the Strategy and Security Council Resolution 2178, has just finalized a vast stocktaking exercise in which it concluded that the United Nations is currently undertaking more than 200 PVE projects at the request of 80 member states. The open, constructive stance of the Under-Secretary-General, combined with his focus on practical results, has raised hopes among several interlocutors of a more responsive, inclusive, and impactful office.

Additionally, improvement in coordination among UN entities, including the UNOCT, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and its Terrorism Prevention Branch, is already evident. The Secretary-General and more than 35 UN entities, including the UNOCT, Interpol, and the World Customs Organization, recently reached agreement on the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (Compact). Signed by all relevant parties in March 2018, the Compact will hopefully lead to better counterterrorism coordination, evidence-based programming, and monitoring and evaluation. It is also operationally relevant because the CTITF never had agreed terms of reference. It is important not only to reference the Compact in the General Assembly's resolution on the sixth review of the Strategy but also to encourage the United Nations to measure progress made implementing the Compact on the occasion of each subsequent Strategy review.

Finally, the nature of the threat of violent extremism and terrorism has evolved and is increasingly complex. A growing body of research shows that apart from ideology, pathways to radicalization that lead to terrorism can be explained by state conduct, including arrests and killings of close family members and friends by security actors,<sup>10</sup> and to a lesser extent traditional criminogenic drivers and other motivations.<sup>11</sup> The need for a holistic approach to preventing and countering terrorism is becoming increasingly urgent and multifaceted as evidenced by migration driven by conflict and violent extremism.<sup>12</sup> More policy-relevant options, supported by practical, evidence-based research, are needed for more effectively and humanely addressing the nexus between migration and security, including PVE.

The presence and power of terrorist organizations and ideologies also are constantly shifting and evolving. Some, such as al-Qaida, have seen a decrease in the scale and frequency of attacks over the past two years, although the group and its affiliates are resilient and still considered a destructive force. Al-Shabaab, which has pledged its allegiance to al-Qaida, is widely believed responsible for what the Somali government has called the country's worst terrorist attack ever, which in October 2017 killed at least 300 people and left hundreds more seriously injured. In addition, against a sustained international effort, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Daesh) has lost much of the territory that it had brutally seized in Iraq and Syria. Although the space for ISIL to operate on the battlefield has been reduced significantly in 2017–2018, there are serious concerns that the appeal of the group as a radicalizing element has not diminished accordingly. The threat continues from ISIL and its branches active in Afghanistan, Libya, Nigeria, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Attacks by individuals and the use of low-cost and readily available weapons, such as knives and vehicles, can make the attacks difficult to thwart. There are further concerns about the potential dangers posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) returning to their countries

10 UNDP, *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, p. 5.

11 James Khalil, "The Three Pathways (3P) Model of Violent Extremism: A Framework to Guide Policymakers to the Right Questions About Their Preventive Countermeasures," *RUSI Journal* 162, no. 4 (13 September 2017).

12 For example, see Tuesday Reitano and Peter Tinti, "Reviewing the Evidence Base on Migration and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)," Counter-Terrorism Monitoring, Reporting and Support Mechanism, n.d., <http://ct-morse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/EU-CVE-Migration-.pdf>.

of residence or relocating to other nations and the burden on criminal justice systems, communities, and civil society to develop prosecution, rehabilitation, and reintegration strategies. Stemming in large part from the FTF phenomenon, more countries than ever (more than half of all UN member states) are affected by the threat of violent extremism and terrorism. The core issues and continuing challenges related to the FTF phenomenon were highlighted in a recent edition of the *CTED Trends Report*.<sup>13</sup> Right- and left-wing extremism continues to rise across Europe and North America. In 2016 the overall number of attacks committed by right- and left-wing violent extremist groups in Europe was significantly higher than that claimed by ISIL, although the number of victims killed was comparatively low.<sup>14</sup>

The United Nations and its member states are challenged to continuously adapt to new developments and adequately address emerging threats. Addressing existing and evolving threats effectively requires better use of evidence so that the diagnosis is driven by data rather than motivated by politics. For instance, despite a rise in violent right-wing extremist incidents over the past decade, the United Nations has paid little attention to this typology in its policies, discourse, or programming.<sup>15</sup> Despite differences in their methods, all terrorist groups' actions destroy local economies and communities, impede development, and fly in the face of core UN values. Understanding and addressing the grievances that drive recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism and terrorism at the micro and macro levels are essential preventive measures that must involve local communities, alongside efforts to

strengthen human rights-compliant criminal justice systems, rule of law institutions, and the conduct of state (security) actors.



UN Photo/Kim Haughton

Secretary-General António Guterres (right) with Vladimir Ivanovich Voronkov, newly sworn in as Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism.

A wider array of governmental agencies, intergovernmental bodies, and nongovernmental actors, including civil society and the private sector, need to be engaged and involved to prevent and counter the threat of terrorism more effectively.<sup>16</sup> Many national governments are reluctant to create the necessary conditions to allow for meaningful contributions from subnational actors. Linked to that problem, there is ample evidence of a trust deficit among these actors in many jurisdictions that hinders cooperation and partnerships and impedes effective counterterrorism and PVE efforts.<sup>17</sup>


13 CTED, "The Challenge of Returning and Relocating Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Research Perspectives," *CTED Trends Report*, March 2018, <https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CTED-Trends-Report-March-2018.pdf>.

14 European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report," 2017, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/tesat2017.pdf>.

15 For example, in the United States there is increasing emphasis on "radical Islamist extremism," but the data show that other forms of radical violent extremism are more prevalent. Since 12 September 2001, "[o]f the 85 violent extremist incidents that resulted in death ..., far right[-]wing violent extremist groups were responsible for 62 (73 percent) while radical Islamist violent extremists were responsible for 23 (27 percent)." U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Countering Violent Extremism: Actions Needed to Define Strategy and Assess Progress of Federal Efforts," GAO-17-300, April 2017, p. 4, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/683984.pdf>. One study shows that far-right plots and attacks outnumber Islamist incidents by almost two to one. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, "Recruitment and Radicalization Among U.S. Far-Right Terrorists: Report to the Office of University Programs, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security," November 2016, [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_RecruitmentRadicalizationAmongUSFarRightTerrorists\\_Nov2016.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_RecruitmentRadicalizationAmongUSFarRightTerrorists_Nov2016.pdf).

16 For example, see Eric Rosand, "Communities First: A Blueprint for Organizing and Sustaining a Global Movement Against Violent Extremism," The Prevention Project, December 2016, [http://www.organizingagainste.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Communities\\_First\\_December\\_2016.pdf](http://www.organizingagainste.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Communities_First_December_2016.pdf).

17 For example, see Floris Vermeulen, "Suspect Communities; Targeting Violent Extremism on the Local Level: Policies of Engagement in Amsterdam, Berlin, and London," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 2 (2014): 286–306. See also Harriet Allen et al., "Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review," Royal United Services Institute, 16 October 2015, [http://cve-kenya.org:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/40/1/Allan%20et%20al\\_2015\\_Drivers%20of%20VE%20-%20Hypotheses%20and%20Literature%20Review.pdf](http://cve-kenya.org:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/40/1/Allan%20et%20al_2015_Drivers%20of%20VE%20-%20Hypotheses%20and%20Literature%20Review.pdf).



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In light of this, more actors are interested, engaged, and involved in counterterrorism and PVE at political and practitioner levels, highlighting the need for and complexity of strategic coherence and coordination to ensure effective implementation of the Strategy. Yet, increasing political polarization among a growing number of UN member states is making it difficult to maintain the level of consensus and progress that was achieved on counterterrorism and PVE issues in recent years.

## MAINSTREAMING A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IN PRACTICE

The United Nations has long had a norm-setting role in counterterrorism efforts, consistent with the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter. Under this normative banner, international counterterrorism efforts led to the Strategy, a set of international legal instruments, and a number of Security Council resolutions that impose obligations for states to undertake measures to combat terrorism in accordance with international law, in particular international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law. Pillar IV of the Strategy is devoted to “[m]easures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.” It states that the “rule of law is essential to all components of the Strategy, recognizing that effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing.” In 2005 the Commission on Human Rights created the mandate for a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, which has been renewed every three years, to ensure that every person is entitled to all the rights and freedoms recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights without distinction.

A previous Blue Sky report noted that international counterterrorism efforts have evolved in an insulated way largely “siloe[d] from the United Nations’ broader peace and security or development efforts.”<sup>18</sup> This is particularly concerning because the counterterrorism arena is particularly susceptible to potential human rights abuses.

The rhetoric on human rights in more recent Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2396, is fairly strong. Yet, although some advances have been made, including repeated efforts by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and the Office of the UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), practical guidance to member states and implementation is sorely lacking. Language in some resolutions has the potential to infringe on freedom to travel, freedom of speech and expression, and other fundamental rights. Resolutions state that measures should be consistent with international law but provide no guidance in that regard, most evidently by the proliferation of emergency measures following a terrorist attack that permit derogations from states’ human rights obligations. The newly appointed Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism has accordingly prioritized this issue and that of the normalization of exceptional national security powers within ordinary legal systems in her mandate.<sup>19</sup>

On 26 February 2018, in his last address as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein expressed grave concerns about the extent to which human rights are not being upheld. “Time and again,” he explained, “my office and I have brought to the attention of the international community violations of human rights which should have served as a trigger for preventive action. Time and again, there has been minimal action.” He added that “families grieve in too many parts of the world for those lost to brutal terrorism, while others suffer because their loved ones are arrested arbitrarily, tortured or killed at a black site, and were called terrorists for simply having criticized the government; and others await execution for crimes committed when they were children. While still more can be killed by police with impunity.”<sup>20</sup>

A growing body of research since the last review of the Strategy shows statistically significant correlations between human rights abuses committed by state actors and radicalization and recruitment to violent extremism and terrorism.<sup>21</sup> In several countries, abuses by the state, real or perceived, are linked to a trust deficit between government and communities. Meanwhile, the space for human rights defenders,

<sup>18</sup> Fink et al., “Blue Sky II,” p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Fionnuala Ni Aoláin, “My Priorities as UN Special Rapporteur on Counter Terrorism: The Problem of Permanent Emergencies,” Just Security, 9 October 2017, <https://www.justsecurity.org/45640/priorities-special-rapporteur-counter-terrorism-problem-permanent-emergencies/>.

<sup>20</sup> Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, opening statement at the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council, 26 February 2018, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=22702&LangID=E>.

<sup>21</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, “Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism,” *IEP Report*, no. 36 (November 2015), <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf>.

humanitarian actors, and other civil society organizations is shrinking, while concerns over abuse of civil society organizations for terrorism purposes prevail. A Duke University report noted that “[t]here has, instead, been a tendency to treat civil society organizations and their activities as homogenous and to diagnose problems with—and then devise solutions to—countering terrorism financing regimes that overlook, and may in some cases, deepen adverse impacts.” It also is vital that there is a deeper understanding of “how responses to terrorism and violent extremism may, in practice, undermine gender equality.”<sup>22</sup>

Broad and overbearing counterterrorism measures are also having “a ‘chilling effect’ on life-saving and needs-based humanitarian assistance.”<sup>23</sup> In order to avoid such situations, member states and UN entities should ensure that counterterrorism legislation and measures do not impede humanitarian activities, including medical activities, or engagement with all relevant actors as foreseen by international humanitarian law, including in areas where terrorist groups are active. There are ongoing concerns that the definitions of terrorism in national laws are overly broad while the absence of a definition and the underconceptualized nature of the terms “violent extremism” and “radicalization” can create a slippery slope for profiling and marginalization of certain communities. In Somalia, for example, efforts to provide water, food, and other basic supplies in the midst of the drought crisis were hampered not only by security concerns but also by a lack of clarity regarding the consequences of counterterrorism laws.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, looking at the relationship between heavy-handed law enforcement and security measures and the drivers of recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism, a recent UNDP report found that

71 percent of individuals interviewed indicated that governmental action, including the arrest or killing of loved ones, was the tipping point that made them join a terrorist group.<sup>25</sup> Unsurprisingly, member states are often much less vocal when raising human rights issues in discussions on counterterrorism and PVE. The United Nations must be more proactive and consistent in this regard and carefully consider the lawfulness of counterterrorism and PVE efforts, particularly as they relate to international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law. On 21 February 2017, the former Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism presented a report to the Human Rights Council, advising that the responsibilities of the new office of the Under-Secretary-General “would include, at their core, the protection and promotion of human rights while countering terrorism and would work in close cooperation with, and on the advice of, [OHCHR].”<sup>26</sup>

Insufficient resources are devoted to the implementation of Pillar IV, with unrealistic expectations of actors such as OHCHR and the (part-time) Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. Reforms to the UN architecture have started, but the reform elements and structures that will be mandated to uphold human rights and fulfill the responsibilities set out in Pillar IV have yet to be given proper attention.<sup>27</sup> The aim of such reforms should include providing member states with sufficient guidance to realize their human rights obligations. Today, some describe a lack of practical, rather than academic, human rights-related guidance in relation to implementing counterterrorism and PVE programming, including on the need to protect children, promote women’s rights and gender equality, support victims of terrorism,

22 Duke Law International Human Rights Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, “Tightening the Purse Strings: What Countering Terrorism Financing Costs Gender Equality and Security,” 2017, p. 8, <https://law.duke.edu/sites/default/files/humanrights/tighteningpursestrings.pdf>.


23 Jessica S. Burniske and Naz K. Modirzadeh, “Pilot Empirical Survey Study on the Impact of Counterterrorism Measures on Humanitarian Action,” Harvard Law School Program on International Law and Armed Conflict, March 2017, p. 1, <http://blogs.harvard.edu/pilac/files/2017/03/Pilot-Empirical-Survey-Study-and-Comment-2017.pdf>.

24 Sandi Halimuddin, “U.S. Counterterrorism Laws Block International Humanitarian Aid,” World Policy, 19 December 2013, <https://worldpolicy.org/2013/12/19/u-s-counterterrorism-laws-block-international-humanitarian-aid>. See Jason Burke, “Anti-Terrorism Laws Have ‘Chilling Effect’ on Vital Aid Deliveries to Somalia,” *Guardian*, 26 April 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/apr/26/anti-terrorism-laws-have-chilling-effect-on-vital-aid-deliveries-to-somalia>.

25 UNDP, *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, p. 5.

26 UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism*, A/HRC/34/61, 21 February 2017, para. 69 (annual report).

27 Fionnuala Ni Aoláin and Martin Scheinin, “Centralizing Human Rights in the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,” Just Security, 16 March 2018, <https://www.justsecurity.org/53583/centralizing-human-rights-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>.

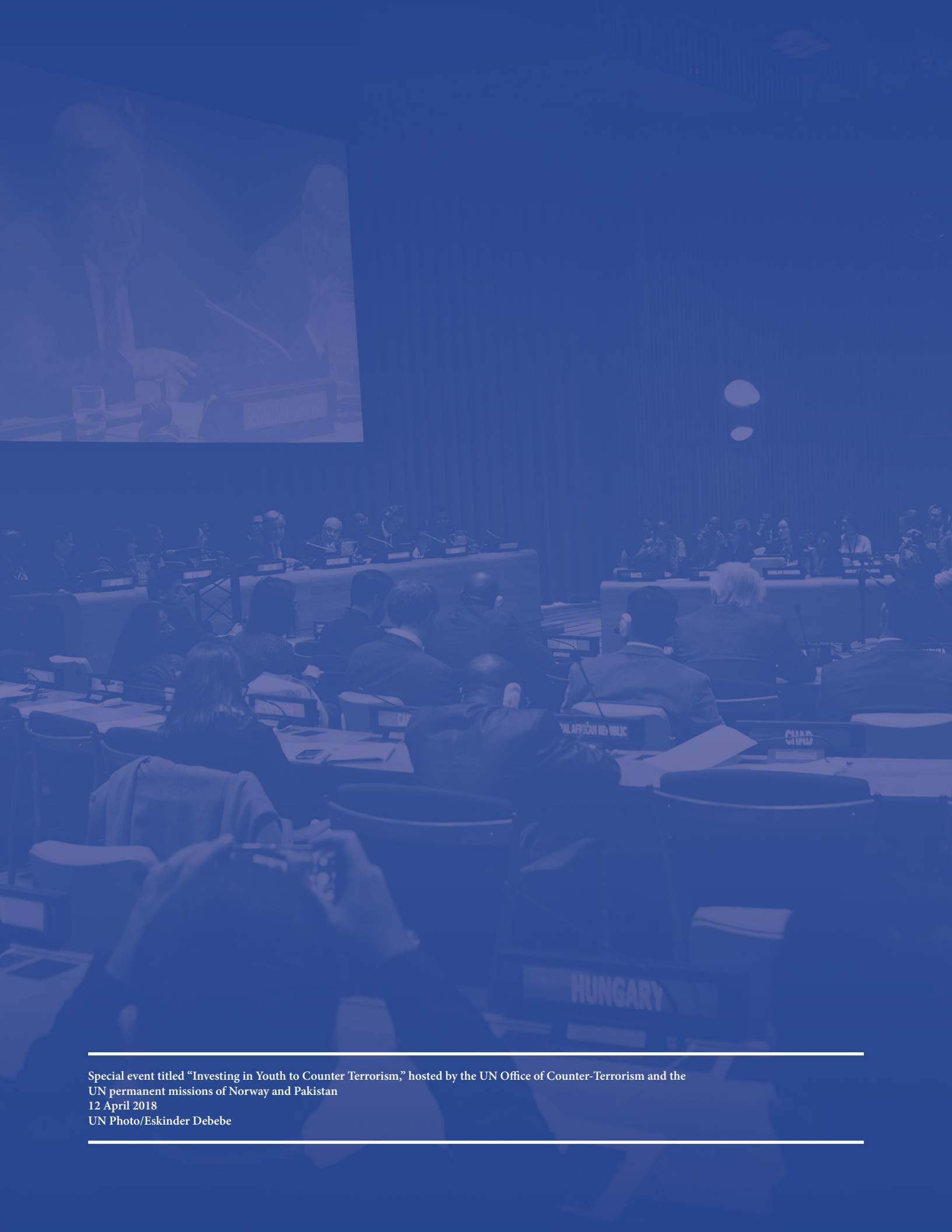


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and conduct lawful preventive investigations and prosecutions. Drawing on assessments and findings developed by other relevant Special Rapporteurs is essential in this regard.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For example, see UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, S/2017/249, 15 April 2017; OHCHR, “Statement by the Special Rapporteur at the ‘Launch of the Parliamentary Fact Sheet on the Death Penalty and Terrorism-Related Offences,’” 20 October 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20800&LangID=E>; UN General Assembly, *Cultural Rights: Note by the Secretary-General*, A/72/155, 17 July 2017, (containing the report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights).



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Special event titled “Investing in Youth to Counter Terrorism,” hosted by the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and the UN permanent missions of Norway and Pakistan  
12 April 2018  
UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

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## COUNTERTERRORISM, PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, AND DEVELOPMENT

The nexus among counterterrorism, PVE, and development is especially relevant in light of Pillar I of the Strategy, which focuses on addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This issue has evolved on paper and in practice in recent years, with an increased focus on the prevention of violent extremism as a more sustainable approach to enhancing societal resilience than solely responsive or repressive actions. In 2016 the Secretary-General's PVE plan of action received a mixed reception among member states, despite the fact that the vast majority of its substance was already enshrined in other binding documents or as part of ongoing, globally accepted mandates. This disconnect can perhaps be explained by the content of the debate surrounding the plan's unveiling. Concerns were raised that it was being used, among other things, as a pretext to interfere in domestic sovereignty, although the critiques stopped short of denying the necessity of PVE and that the plan could be successful on the ground if properly implemented.

Among other things, the PVE plan of action encouraged member states to develop whole-of-government and whole-of-society national PVE action plans. Today, the United Nations, through UNDP and in certain cases in partnership with the UNOCT and external actors, is very involved in supporting the development and implementation of such plans and other activities that are not only PVE relevant but also PVE specific. Development actors such as UNDP had been resistant to becoming involved in security-related work, and although this view has clearly shifted in the last five years,<sup>29</sup> a large number of actors in this space, notably at the grassroots level, are reluctant to do work labeled as PVE, let alone countering violent extremism

(CVE) or counterterrorism. These groups often cite the labels as exacerbating existing trust deficits between grassroots organizations and communities, as well as grassroots organizations and governments, and wish to avoid being instrumentalized by security-focused agendas. More generally, due to continued disagreement about the definition and scope of PVE, its relation with counterterrorism, and the position of the PVE plan of action, there are concerns that some of the promising progress made in the field may not be sustained.

Research demonstrates the negative impact that violent extremism is having on sustainable development.<sup>30</sup> A recent World Bank/UN report devoted considerable attention to the issues that intersect development, PVE, and counterterrorism.<sup>31</sup> At the Fragility Forum in March 2018, the World Bank announced that it had “doubled [its] resources to build resilience in fragile and conflict-affected areas” and had shifted its focus toward “the drivers of fragility, addressing the risks early and, when risks are high or mounting, finding inclusive solutions through dialogue, and adjusted policies, including development policies.”<sup>32</sup>

In February 2016, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) updated its guidelines for determining how development assistance can be used and officially recorded.<sup>33</sup> Influenced by evidence that extremist violence is negatively affecting development assistance, the OECD determined that certain activities undertaken for the purpose of PVE are now eligible for inclusion in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) category. By allowing this and recognizing that ODA activities can address factors conducive to violent extremism

29 For example, see Eelco Kessels and Christina Nemr, “Countering Violent Extremism and Development Assistance: Identifying Synergies, Obstacles, and Opportunities,” Global Center on Cooperative Security (UK), February 2016, <http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/February-2016-CVE-and-Development-policy-brief.pdf>; UNDP, “Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity,” 2016, <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Conflict%20Prevention/Discussion%20Paper%20-%20Preventing%20Violent%20Extremism%20by%20Promoting%20Inclusive%20%20Development.pdf?download>.

30 World Bank, *Conflict, Security and Development: 2011 World Development Report* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2011), p. 270, [https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011\\_Full\\_Text.pdf](https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf).

31 United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2018), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337>.

32 Franck Bousquet, “Let’s Work Together to Prevent Violence and Protect the Vulnerable Against Fragility,” World Bank, 13 March 2018, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/lets-work-together-prevent-violence-and-protect-vulnerable-against-fragility>.

33 OECD Development Assistance Committee, “DAC High Level Meeting Communiqué,” 19 February 2016, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/DAC-HLM-Communique-2016.pdf>.

and terrorism, the OECD has signaled a fundamental conceptual shift with profound implications for funders and implementers. One activity now permissible under the revised OECD Development Assistance Committee guidelines is working with civil society groups and others “specifically to prevent radicalisation, support reintegration and deradicalisation, and promote community engagement.”<sup>34</sup> This provides an opportunity to allocate ODA-eligible funds to support nongovernmental partners at the local level and invest in marginalized communities, something on which past reviews of the Strategy and previous Blue Sky reports have focused.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals highlight and track the nexus between development and security in Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.<sup>35</sup> Notably, consultations with civil society are a deliberate element of the sustainable development agenda. In December 2017 at the request of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service held a consultation with civil society, noting that “[s]takeholder engagement in long-term sustainable development works best if it is organized as a continuous, structured process, rather than on an ad-hoc basis or through unrelated one[-]off engagement exercises at different points of the policy cycle.”<sup>36</sup> This sort of initiative should also be an integral part of holistic implementation of the Strategy. The UNOCT should adapt and put into place a mechanism of this type to allow for a sustained process of engagement with civil society on issues related to countering terrorism and PVE.

In sum, a lot of good work on issues at the intersection of development and security is being done at the community level by UN actors such as UNDP and UN Women, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and local civil society organizations. UN efforts to implement a comprehensive approach to security in Somalia, for example, integrate PVE within a wider security- and development-based approach on the ground.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the UN counterterrorism architecture,

notably at headquarters, has yet to adapt accordingly and must make improvements to effectively support the implementation of critical whole-of-society-related elements of the Strategy. Opportunities for building trust between counterterrorism, PVE-specific, and PVE-relevant actors at the United Nations and at the member state level should draw from better practices undertaken in other parts of the United Nations that systematically reach out to civil society and deal with issues such as conflict prevention. At the very least, the United Nations should be encouraged to support or endorse other actors already doing specific PVE work in the field and with local actors, such as the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). Mechanisms for systematic engagement between UNOCT and CTITF members and civil society organizations are not in place.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> UNDP, “Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,” n.d., <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions.html> (accessed 16 April 2018).

<sup>36</sup> UN Non-Governmental Liaison Office, “Civil Society Consultation for the UN Development System Review Process October–December 2017,” n.d., [https://unnngls.org/images/PDF/UNDS\\_review\\_NGLS\\_civil\\_society\\_consultation\\_summary.pdf](https://unnngls.org/images/PDF/UNDS_review_NGLS_civil_society_consultation_summary.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> UN Assistance Mission in Somalia, “Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism,” n.d., <https://unsom.unmissions.org/prevention-and-countering-violent-extremism>.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION IN STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

As the 2016 Blue Sky report observed in its conclusion,

[t]he failure of the United Nations to adapt its institutional structures to deal with the growing scale and importance of the threat of terrorism and violent extremism has caused states to seek alternatives for pursuing cooperative action to address the threat. ... The benefits of the United Nations remain clear when it can help to garner consensus around issues and develop useful norms, but the lack of coherence, internal turf battles, opacity of process, and inability to translate words into action [are] making it difficult for a growing number of member states to invest their time and effort into the United Nations' counterterrorism program.<sup>38</sup>

Two years later, some of these issues have been addressed directly. The UNOCT was established and is led by an Under-Secretary-General—a position specially created as part of the architecture change. The new office will assist member states in implementing the Strategy and has five main functions: (1) provide leadership on the General Assembly counterterrorism mandates; (2) enhance coordination and coherence across the 38 CTITF entities to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the Strategy; (3) strengthen the delivery of UN counterterrorism capacity-building assistance to member states; (4) improve visibility, advocacy, and resource mobilization for UN counterterrorism efforts; and (5) ensure that due priority is given to counterterrorism across the UN system and that the important work on PVE is firmly rooted in the Strategy.<sup>39</sup>

The creation of the UNOCT and the appointment of an Under-Secretary-General are widely viewed as welcome developments, but the hope was expressed during consultations for this report that UN counterterrorism architecture reforms and actions

would be better connected to the larger UN peace and security architecture and reform. Furthermore, several of the interlocutors interviewed said that more systematic and sustained change is still needed to address lingering problems related to information sharing and that efforts to increase transparency about the work, governance, and function of the UNOCT and its entities should be supported.

One effort to squarely address coordination issues is the recently adopted Compact. In a speech to the Group of Friends of Countering Terrorism, the Under-Secretary-General explained that

[o]ne of the primary objectives to establish UNOCT was the need to strengthen coordination and coherence of UN's counter-terrorism work. In this context, the Secretary-General announced in the abovementioned speech in London last November, his intention "to develop [a] UN system-wide Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact."

The overarching theme of the Global Compact is the development of an effective working partnership across the UN System, Interpol and the World Customs Organization to strengthen the quality of the UN's counter-terrorism work. To make the long story short—to step up both the exchange of information and joint project implementation. The Global Compact, which was developed through an extensive consultative process with 38 entities, will address the existing coordination and coherence gaps, providing an agreed framework to promote action-oriented collaboration among entities.<sup>40</sup>

The Compact has been signed by a range of stakeholders and is expected to be attached as an appendix to the Secretary-General's report in

38 Millar and Fink, "Blue Sky III," p. 29.

39 UN General Assembly, *Capability of the United Nations System to Assist Member States in Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/71/858, 3 April 2017, para. 64.

40 Vladimir Voronkov, statement to Group of Friends of Countering Terrorism, 12 February 2018, [https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org/counterterrorism.ctitf/files/20180212\\_USGVoronkov\\_remarksGroupofFriendsofCounteringTerrorism.pdf](https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org/counterterrorism.ctitf/files/20180212_USGVoronkov_remarksGroupofFriendsofCounteringTerrorism.pdf).

advance of the sixth review. The Compact is not a binding document. It provides an implementation scheme outlining a series of steps, including briefings and reporting, but lacks a crucial element devoted to assessing its outcomes and evaluating the extent to which “action-oriented collaboration” and coordination is actually going to take hold.

Tracking resource allocation on coordination will help to quantify the substance of the investment in the implementation of the Compact and the enhanced coordination that stems from it at headquarters and in the field. As the Compact commits the signatories to close cooperation in developing an effective shared approach to UN counterterrorism and PVE efforts at headquarters and field levels, continued investments are needed to ensure that all relevant stakeholders work together to optimize internal and external coordination and cooperation in Strategy implementation in New York and in the field.<sup>41</sup> This will also help improve engagement with counterterrorism and PVE actors outside of the United Nations, including various international and regional organizations and platforms such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

The United Nations is well positioned with its presence in the field to collect contextualized data about local factors, such as drivers of violent extremism, conflict dynamics, and the involvement or exclusion of relevant actors on the ground. These data, however, are not being used to their full potential at headquarters to inform policy and to design, deliver, and evaluate capacity-building efforts. UN counterterrorism and PVE efforts and actors must not be siloed but instead must be more effectively embedded in the larger UN peace and security architecture and reform. This will help to mainstream counterterrorism and PVE efforts in all parts of the UN system in order to realize an all-of-UN approach, while benefiting from the specific expertise and data being developed, for example, at the intersection of organized crime and terrorism or support for children affected by violence and conflict.

The Compact stresses that its “principles will be based on the balanced implementation of the ... Strategy, premised on compliance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law with an essential focus on gender equality and youth empowerment.” Ensuring that all four pillars are being implemented in this way is very important. Moving beyond the intention to achieve that balance on paper requires strategic vision to ensure that one set of actions or activities relating to one or two pillars does not eclipse or is not perceived to diminish the importance and value of other pillars. In this regard, actions speak louder than words. For example, the UNOCT has sent out invitations to capitals for the first UN high-level conference of heads of counterterrorism agencies of member states, to be held at the United Nations in New York on 28–29 June 2018.<sup>42</sup> Efforts by the UNOCT “to bring together the senior-most officials in charge of day-to-day counter-terrorism efforts within Member States, for operational and practical exchanges to strengthen international cooperation” on the occasion of the sixth review of the Strategy, run the risk of solely highlighting Pillar II of the Strategy. Whatever the content of the conversation to be had, the event—the first high-profile event organized in New York by the UNOCT—creates the impression that only the views of security officials, including intelligence agency representatives, are important and sufficient to counterterrorism and PVE. This is in direct conflict with the Strategy and the PVE plan of action, which recognize the need to engage nongovernmental stakeholders such as academics, civil society, and the private sector. Several member states wrote to the Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General to request the inclusion of these stakeholders beyond the limited suggestion that member states invite representatives as members of their delegations and host side events.

Another important practical effort to improve coordination has been undertaken by the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and CTED. In Resolution 2395, passed in December 2017,

41 For more information, see Millar and Fink, “Blue Sky III”; Alistair Millar, “Mission Critical or Mission Creep? Issues to Consider for the Future of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee and Its Executive Directorate,” Global Center, October 2017, [http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CTED-Mandate-Renewal\\_Policy-Brief-1.pdf](http://www.globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CTED-Mandate-Renewal_Policy-Brief-1.pdf); International Federation for Human Rights, “The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Complex: Bureaucracy, Political Influence and Civil Liberties,” No. 700a, September 2017, [https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/9.25\\_fidh\\_final\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/9.25_fidh_final_compressed.pdf).

42 Vladimir Voronkov, UNOCT statement to UN member states, 26 February 2018, [https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism.ctitf/files/20180226\\_USGVoronkov\\_Statement\\_MSBriefing.pdf](https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism.ctitf/files/20180226_USGVoronkov_Statement_MSBriefing.pdf).

the Security Council sought to address the issue of coordination between CTED and the UNOCT for practical reasons because the former remains under the direction of the Security Council rather than under the direction of the new Under-Secretary-General. The resolution directed the UNOCT and CTED “to draft a joint report by 30 March 2018 setting out practical steps to be taken by both bodies to ensure the incorporation of CTED recommendations and analysis into UNOCT’s work, to be considered by the CTC, as well as the General Assembly in the context” of the review of the Strategy.<sup>43</sup> The “Paragraph 18 Report” looks at linkages between the mandates of CTED and the UNOCT. It also describes how CTED’s analysis is useful as an evidence base for the UNCCT as it develops and implements projects. The report enumerates a number of practical steps that can be taken to improve coordination and cooperation between the two entities on identifying priority regions and areas for collaboration, country visits and follow-up, joint outreach activities, the design and development of projects and programs, information sharing, and strategic communications. It remains to be seen how this will be done in practice.

Lastly, beyond the Compact and the Paragraph 18 Report, some practical measures have been suggested for enhancing cooperation and transference of knowledge within the UN system. One idea would encourage double-hatting experts across different CTITF entities, drawing from a model in which a position was created comprising part-time work at CTED and part-time work at UN Women. A case has been made that this arrangement has improved coordination and information sharing between those entities in practice and could bring similar benefits among other CTITF entities. Some interlocutors view the secondment of UN headquarters personnel to field offices and missions and vice versa as beneficial in this regard as well. At the same time, practical concerns have been raised. CTITF entities have expressed some reservations about the burden of taking already overworked staff, even on a part-time basis, away from their current jobs. Between now and the next Strategy review, in 2020, it is reasonable that time should be allocated to assess the extent to which important coordination and sharing initiatives are taking root

before considering other measures, such as knowledge transfer and additional secondments.

Furthermore, although the UNOCT’s creation and its potential to optimize coordination of UN counterterrorism and PVE efforts are encouraging, some hail it as the “cheapest reform in history.” With only five regular-budget positions and most of its extrabudgetary funding focused on capacity building, the office is struggling to find appropriate staff for various responsibilities that member states demand but do not sufficiently fund, such as policy leadership and coordination. This is further impeded by a legacy institutional and staffing structure that has created a complicated and suboptimal web of units and reporting lines.

The process of developing and agreeing to the Paragraph 18 Report and the Compact already provides evidence of efforts made in improving coordination and cooperation between the UNOCT and CTED and with other CTITF entities. As with most promising ideas and good documents at the United Nations, the challenge will be in the implementation.

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43 UN Security Council, S/RES/2395, 21 December 2017, para. 18.



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UN police patrol in Timbuktu  
11 March 2017  
UN Photo/Harandane Dicko

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## MEASURING AND EVALUATING IMPACT

The creation of the UNOCT and other associated changes to the UN counterterrorism and PVE architecture are quite a recent occurrence. Therefore, a constructive look ahead will ensure that, by the time the seventh Strategy review takes place in two years, there will be an opportunity to assess more systematically the state of Strategy implementation and the impact that UN counterterrorism and PVE actors and efforts have had in this regard.

Properly measuring and evaluating impact requires forethought and planning, including the development of a robust monitoring and evaluation methodology with clear indicators and baseline data to quantify and qualify results. There is evidence of some indicators already in place, primarily at the project management level, for example in UNCCT quarterly and annual reports. The 2017 report notes that the move of the UNCCT from the UN Department of Political Affairs to the UNOCT “did not directly impact its 5-Year Programme, which remains the guiding document for the capacity-building work of the [UNCCT].” Now in the third year of its five-year program, the UNCCT, which serves primarily as a capacity-building entity, is tracking ongoing or initiated projects and providing an assessment of results and impact. The program will be nearing completion by the time the next Strategy review takes place. A Programme Results Framework was created in May 2017 with the support of a monitoring and evaluation expert, using the UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards to allow the UNCCT “to systematically monitor progress in achieving the outputs and outcomes of the 5-Year Programme based on a set of performance indicators and targets.”

Other data are available from different parts of the UN system, including reporting from the UNODC on its various programs and CTED’s Global Implementation Survey, which reviews member states’ implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1373, 1624, and 2178. Each survey includes general standards and recommended practices that “should be in place to give effect to the provisions.”<sup>44</sup> Such information will help target and tailor capacity-building efforts by the UNOCT, UNODC, and others. In tandem,

the UNCCT Programme Results Framework and the survey can provide a useful tool for assessing whether and how the United Nations is using its analysis capabilities to yield effective capacity-building activities and if these activities are having the intended effect. Recommendations from OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism could also be linked more closely to project results for more systematically assessing the impact of activities on human rights. Likewise, country and program data from UNDP could help to strengthen the nexus of development assistance and counterterrorism and PVE in capacity-building efforts so that monitoring and evaluation efforts are conducted across all four pillars of the Strategy.

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44 CTED, *Global Survey of the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) by Member States*, S/2016/49, 20 January 2016, [https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Global-Implementation-Survey-1373\\_EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Global-Implementation-Survey-1373_EN.pdf).



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The prior sections have set out an overview of developments concerning the UN counterterrorism and PVE architecture, actors, and actions. This report has noted the promising efforts underway to improve coordination within the UN system and with partners. The importance of promoting and protecting human rights while countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism have also been raised along with the importance of more effectively addressing the nexus between preventing violent extremism and supporting development goals. The following list of recommendations consolidates some of the positive steps taken and addresses some of the remaining challenges confronting the UN system, including not only coordination but also transparency and more systematic measurement and evaluation of impact in future reviews of the Strategy.

## ADAPTING TO CHANGE

### **1. Continue to operationalize the reform of UN counterterrorism and PVE efforts.**

The establishment of the UNOCT and appointment of its Under-Secretary-General should be the beginning rather than the end of the reform process. Among other things, a legacy institutional and staffing structure has created a complicated and suboptimal web of units and reporting lines within the new office. This will need to be streamlined to further improve coordination and enhance efforts to implement the Strategy across all four pillars.

### **2. Improve the evidence base on (responses to) violent extremism and terrorism.**

More context-specific research data on and analysis of the threat of terrorism, including early-warning and other policy-relevant information, are needed to inform strategic and programmatic actions, including capacity building and coordination. Research and practice sharing is necessary to recalibrate policies and check long-standing measures and their underlying assumptions to avoid unintended negative consequences. Some core elements of the Compact and the Paragraph 18 Report seek to fill this gap within and

among relevant UN entities and in partnership with other international and regional organizations, but more should be done to draw from external research, data, and good practices.

### **3. Focus on trust building.**

International actors need to design and deliver projects and support other actions that build and sustain partnerships (1) across governments, for example by implementing multisectoral, whole-of-society national action plans on PVE; (2) at the headquarters and field levels at the United Nations and other relevant intergovernmental bodies; and (3) between governmental and nongovernmental actors, including civil society and the private sector. One way to improve trust is to develop initiatives that bring governmental and nongovernmental actors together as constructive partners at the local level, for example by supporting community policing and civilian-centered community safety initiatives or by bringing youth-focused ministries together in project partnerships at the local level.

### **4. Inform UN counterterrorism and PVE prioritization of issues with critical developments, member state needs, available resources, and UN capacities and constraints.**

In relation to counterterrorism and PVE, the United Nations cannot and should not be expected to do everything, everywhere, all the time. Yet, it should provide a clear indication of its comparative advantages to help play to its strengths and identify and focus on core goals and priority countries and themes. In turn, this will help donors target resources.

### **5. Engage with civil society regularly and systematically.**

The UNOCT should develop a regular mechanism for engagement in this regard by, for example, forming a civil society advisory board or actively and deliberately soliciting civil society inputs and seeking their engagement during project development, implementation, and evaluation.

## **6. Advance a more sophisticated discussion on gender issues.**

An approach that is sensitive to gender-specific issues takes into account experiences, effects, impacts, and needs of women, girls, men, and boys by considering differing access to justice and legal rights, access to and control of resources and services, and the sociocultural beliefs and practices that govern them. It also recognizes that men and women can be victims and perpetrators. A more concerted effort must be made to mainstream gender across UN counterterrorism and PVE agencies and efforts and build capacity in this important area, as well as continue to develop and deliver specific gender-focused programs.

## MAINSTREAMING A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IN PRACTICE

### **7. Prioritize reforms within the new counterterrorism architecture that ground UN counterterrorism and PVE efforts within a human rights framework.**

The UNOCT should work with its CTITF Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law While Countering Terrorism, special rapporteurs, and other relevant UN human rights experts to ensure it has the appropriate in-house expertise to provide guidance on policy and the practical implementation of programming in a manner compliant with international law, including human rights, international humanitarian, and refugee law, and a plan to support member states and the UN system in a rule of law-compliant approach to Strategy implementation with due attention to Pillar IV.

### **8. Inform policy, institutional change, programming, and resource allocation on the basis of evidence and research conducted through a human rights lens.**

UN human rights mechanisms should be equipped to provide more practical technical guidance on human rights-compliant counterterrorism and PVE efforts, promote further research, and apply existing evidence on human rights abuses that create conditions conducive to violent extremism and terrorism.

Involvement of more experts with practical law enforcement or military experience would be useful for explaining to their peers in those occupations how respect for international human rights is not only an obligation but also a benefit in a broader sense.

### **9. Address actively the problem of shrinking civil society space.**

All 38 members of the CTITF should draw on data from relevant special rapporteurs, the Human Rights Council, OHCHR, and others in order to take stock of civil society space and work to highlight issues in every country in which they work. The stocktaking should inform policy and capacity-building assistance and include analysis of laws pertaining to the NGOs regarding freedom of assembly and obstacles to the participation of civil society organizations. Such analysis would allow issues of repressive restrictions to be addressed more systematically and effectively while ensuring that civil society organizations are not used for terrorism purposes.

### **10. Provide guidance and policy recommendations on ensuring that counterterrorism and PVE measures do not have negative consequences on principled humanitarian actions.**

The UNOCT should engage with all relevant stakeholders, including humanitarian actors and sanctions experts, with a view to develop guidance and recommendations on how to safeguard principled humanitarian action from unintended consequences of counterterrorism and PVE measures.

## COUNTERTERRORISM, PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM, AND DEVELOPMENT

### **11. Use data on the nexus between development and security to design and implement policy that more adequately reflects that intersection at UN headquarters and in the field.**

This effort should build on the work by the World Bank International Development Assistance fund to the poorest countries, outlined in the recent World

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Bank/UN report. Systematic use of existing governance data should deliberately inform capacity-building efforts undertaken and evaluated by or for the UNOCT and its UNCCT.

**12. Encourage the allocation of ODA-eligible funds to support PVE efforts by independent civil society organizations and other partners at the local level.**

This requires further elaboration and confirmation by the OECD, World Bank, and national development agencies on the precise scope of ODA eligibility in relation to PVE activities and implementers. The United Nations can play an important role in demonstrating the importance of a comprehensive approach to development and security by ensuring that its various agencies work collaboratively with local partners.

**13. Support or endorse international or regional institutions and funding mechanisms for locally led PVE initiatives.**

For example, GCERF has a working model for allowing donors to provide resources that are then delivered to support projects and other initiatives at the community level, using a needs-based and cooperative approach that monitors evaluation and involves the host country as an informed partner.

**14. Provide guidance on the use of security-associated labels for work undertaken by the UNOCT and CTITF members, including guidance for the providers of extrabudgetary funding for these activities.**

For many individuals and organizations working at the community level, programming labeled PVE, CVE, or counterterrorism can have damaging effects on trust with governmental actors and communities. The UNOCT should develop guidance on the usage of those terms while acknowledging that the relevance to PVE for funding purposes can be noted in ways that avoid public labels.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION IN STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

**15. Make better use of field-based research and feedback to inform counterterrorism and PVE policy and the design, implementation, and evaluation of programming, including capacity-building efforts.**

To realize this, better engagement, coordination, and information flow must be prioritized between headquarters and field offices and missions, as well as with independent actors, academia, and international organizations, forums, and platforms outside of the United Nations.

**16. Increase transparency and communication about the internal organization, functions, priorities, resources, activities, and outputs of the UNOCT, CTITF, UNCCT, and UN counterterrorism and PVE priorities.**

Annual UNCCT reports offer some of this information. The UNOCT website and newsletter would benefit from more detailed substance and insights to communicate clearly and cohesively what the UNOCT is doing, why, how, and with whom. This could facilitate better coordination and engagement with other regional and international actors and donors.

**17. Be mindful of the optics on strategic balance across the Strategy.**

Provide a platform for all stakeholders to highlight their work, share good practices, and deepen cooperation. The convening of the first-ever UN high-level conference of heads of counterterrorism agencies of member states sends a signal that security and intelligence take priority over other issues addressed in the Strategy that involve a wider array of stakeholders, including development and human rights experts

and civil society organizations. Conferences engaging other relevant actors should be forthcoming and allow nongovernmental actors to actively participate.

## MEASURING AND EVALUATING IMPACT

### **18. Make use of existing data and draw from evaluation models used elsewhere in and outside the UN system.**

These data can be used with other assessment tools employed by CTITF entities and by others elsewhere in the UN system, such as the Peace Building Commission, and outside to monitor and assess individual counterterrorism and PVE programs in support of the Strategy.

### **19. Include monitoring and evaluation specialists from the program design phase onward to assess overall UNOCT efforts to support Strategy implementation.**

The experts should be independent and focus not just on the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation frameworks for individual capacity-building programs, but also on the evaluation of their relation to and impact on overall Strategy implementation. Likewise, independent monitoring and evaluation specialists could assist the UNOCT with developing an institutional approach to analyze progress across its five core functions and provide an analysis of how extrabudgetary funds are being used to further implementation of the Strategy.

### **20. Establish a framework to measure Strategy implementation more structurally and effectively in preparation for the 2020 review.**

This should look at implementation across all four pillars of the Strategy and draw language from mandates and other resolutions that call for specific actions, including coordination, to be undertaken, for example paragraph 18 of Resolution 2395. In this regard, the stated aims of the Compact could be used to evaluate progress, including the extent to which

coordination and information sharing improved, such as incorporating the use of CTED expert assessments in technical assistance and capacity-building efforts by the UNOCT and other relevant actors, as stated in Resolution 2395. Furthermore, consideration could be given to a peer review mechanism to assess Strategy implementation, such as those employed by the Financial Action Task Force, the Human Rights Council, and the UNODC Implementation Review Mechanism.<sup>45</sup>

### **21. Review and assess progress on regular and systematic inclusion of civil society in all relevant areas of the Strategy.**

It is critical to measure the extent to which civil society organizations are consulted and included in relevant counterterrorism and PVE efforts, drawing on their expertise and credibility at the community and municipal levels and on issue areas including gender, human rights, and youth, for example.

<sup>45</sup> UNODC, "Implementation Review Mechanism," n.d., <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/implementation-review-mechanism.html> (accessed 13 April 2018).



The Global Center on Cooperative Security works with governments, international organizations, and civil society to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to complex international security challenges through collaborative policy research, context-sensitive programming, and capacity development. In collaboration with a global network of expert practitioners and partner organizations, the Global Center fosters stronger multilateral partnerships and convenes key stakeholders to support integrated and inclusive security policies across national, regional, and global levels.

The Global Center focuses on four thematic areas of programming and engagement:

- multilateral security policy
- countering violent extremism
- criminal justice and the rule of law
- financial integrity and inclusion

Across these areas, the Global Center prioritizes partnerships with national and regional stakeholders and works to ensure respect for human rights and empower those affected by transnational violence and criminality to inform international action.