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Twentieth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat

I. Introduction

1. In adopting its resolution 2253 (2015), the Security Council expressed its determination to address the threat posed to international peace and security by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant[1] (ISIL, hereinafter referred to as "Da'esh")[2] and associated individuals and groups and requested that the Secretary-General provide an initial strategic-level report on the threat, followed by updates every four months. In its resolution 2734 (2024), the Council requested that the Secretary-General continue to provide, every six months, strategic-level reports that demonstrate and reflect the gravity of the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, particularly that reflect the impact of these efforts. It further requested that the latest biannual report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities be annexed to the present report.

2. The present report is the twentieth such report.[3] It was prepared by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, with the input of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and in close collaboration with the Monitoring Team and other United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities.

3. During the reporting period, the threat posed to international peace and security by Da'esh remained undiminished. Da'esh continued to maintain a reduced pace of activity in Iraq. In the Syrian Arab Republic, there was a risk of the group exploiting security vacuums after the fall of the Syrian government of Bashar Al-Assad on 8 December. Da'esh and its affiliates continued to increase their focus on activities in Africa, seeking to expand territorial control. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) (QDe.161) continued to pose the predominant terrorist threat in Afghanistan, the region and beyond. The United Nations continued to support

[1] Listed as Al-Qaida in Iraq (QDe.115).
[2] In line with General Assembly resolution 75/291.
[3] See S/2016/92, S/2016/501, S/2016/830, S/2017/97, S/2017/467, S/2018/80, S/2018/770, S/2019/103, S/2019/612, S/2020/95, S/2020/774, S/2021/98, S/2021/682, S/2022/63, S/2022/576, S/2023/76, S/2023/568, S/2024/117 and S/2024/583.

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Member States in countering the threat posed by Da'esh, including in their efforts to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions.

II. Threat assessment

A. Overview and evolution of the threat[4]

4. Aided by less centralized organizational structures,[5] Da'esh and its affiliates remained resilient and adaptable to counter-terrorism pressure. Propaganda output remained extensive, in multiple languages, often aimed at exploiting conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism in the Middle East and elsewhere to appeal to new recruits and attract additional resources. Da'esh reportedly retained access to significant cash reserves, estimated at approximately $10 million in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic alone. While some affiliates reportedly had approximately $2 million in reserves, the Da'esh core allegedly directed them to become self-reliant on their own revenue sources.

5. A range of views remained as to the identity of the Da'esh leader, Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi. There was growing confidence among some Member States that al-Qurashi is Abdul Qadir Mumin (Somali) (not listed), the head of the Da'esh affiliate in Somalia. Abdallah Makki Muslih al-Rafi'i (alias Abu Khadija) (not listed) remained in charge of the Ard al-Mubaraka and Bilad al-Rafidayn "offices", covering Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and the wider Levant.[6] In Africa, only two "offices" were active: the Da'esh Furqan "office", operating in the Lake Chad basin, and the Karrar "office" in East Africa, which remained a key Da'esh financial hub. The Siddiq "office" in Afghanistan assumed oversight of the Caucasus, in addition to its previous responsibilities in Asia.[7] Some Member States noted a transfer of functions from the Da'esh "general directorate of provinces" to its "delegated committee", responsible for administrative control over the affairs of the group. If confirmed, the transfer of functions and the selection of a leader operating outside Iraq or the Syrian Arab Republic could signify a deliberate pivot towards an even more decentralized operational structure.

6. Following the fall of the Syrian government of Bashar Al-Assad on 8 December, there were concerns that stockpiles of advanced weapons, including unmanned aircraft systems, could be unsecured and at risk of falling into the hands of terrorists. The Syrian Badia region continued to serve as a centre for external operational planning of Da'esh and remained a critical region for its activities.

7. In Iraq, the Government's counter-terrorism operations resulted in the death of approximately half of the top level leadership of Da'esh in the country. In August, the so-called deputy "governor" (wali) of Da'esh in Iraq and 13 other operatives were killed. It remained to be seen if Da'esh in Iraq could replenish its fighters and resources in the face of such pressure. On 27 September, Iraq and the United States of America issued a joint statement announcing that the military mission of the international counter-Da'esh coalition was scheduled to end by September 2025 and

[4] More information on the threat posed to international peace and security by Da'esh and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities may be found in the thirty-fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities (S/2025/71).

[5] See S/2023/568.

[6] See S/2024/117.

[7] See S/2022/576.

would transition to bilateral security partnerships for continued support to Iraqi forces.

8. Despite efforts by the Taliban in Afghanistan and regional States, ISIL-K was assessed by Member States to pose the predominant extraregional terrorist threat. The killing of the de facto Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil Ahmed Haqqani, in a suicide bombing on 11 December 2024, claimed by ISIL-K, marked the highest-profile casualty among the de facto authorities since the Taliban takeover. The attack may represent a deliberate attempt by ISIL-K to undermine the Taliban's ability to provide security. In addition to attacks in Afghanistan, ISIL-K supporters also plotted attacks in Europe. In July, French security services arrested an 18-year-old individual who was planning to attack an Olympic soccer match in Saint-Étienne and was connected to a Chechen ISIL member operating in the Syrian Badia. ISIL-K was actively seeking to recruit individuals from Central Asian States. There were reports of small numbers of foreign terrorist fighters continuing to travel to Afghanistan.

9. Da'esh continued its trend of focusing increasingly on various regions in Africa. Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (QDe.162) remained one of the most operationally active Da'esh affiliates. Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (QDe.163) increased attacks and steadily continued to expand the areas under its control. Member State counter-terrorism operations and the activity of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (QDe.159), an Al-Qaida affiliate, in border areas between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger led ISGS to expand further eastward. In northwestern Nigeria, members of a group suspected by Member States to be affiliated with ISGS, known locally as "Lakurawa", re-established the group in September. The Lakurawa consisted of over 200 fighters reportedly from Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and represented a new ISGS-related threat in the region.

10. In Eastern Africa, approximately half the strength of Da'esh in Somalia reportedly consisted of foreign terrorist fighters from a range of countries. Recruitment campaigns targeted regional and North African States, as well as Yemen. According to reports by Member States, Da'esh in Somalia had refocused its efforts on securing financial sustainability, with revenue allocated to strengthening operational capacity. The operational capabilities of Da'esh in Somalia had reportedly evolved significantly, marked by advancements in weapons and technology. In Central and Southern Africa, Member States assessed that the Allied Democratic Forces (CDe.001) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained resilient despite the gains made through Operation Shujaa conducted by Congolese and Ugandan forces. In Mozambique, Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (not listed) continued to maintain a presence along the coast of Cabo Delgado.

11. The United Nations continued to verify the severe impact of Da'esh activity in numerous conflict zones, including in parts of Africa. In the Sahel, Da'esh affiliates conducted attacks, including against schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, resulting in the killing of children and the denial of humanitarian assistance. These groups continued to expand their operations into coastal countries, especially in Benin and Togo, with a potential impact on Ghana. In Burkina Faso, intensified attacks in September by ISGS, as well as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, contributed to approximately 30 per cent of health facilities closing or reducing their operations to a minimum, depriving approximately 4 million people of access to healthcare. In Mali, the use of unmanned aircraft systems by Da'esh affiliates against civilians resulted in the killing of civilians and internal displacement.

12. Member States continued to note the widespread accessibility of advanced technology, such as the three-dimensional printing of weapon components, including parts for unmanned aircraft systems, and experimentation with artificial intelligence. The use of artificial intelligence by terrorist groups might pose a particular risk in the

recruitment and radicalization of young people to violence, including through more targeted and tailored propaganda. Several Member States noted that the average age of those being radicalized to terrorism appeared to be decreasing.

B. Situation of suspected Da'esh members and their family members in conflict zones

13. The United Nations continued to monitor camps, detention and other facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, where individuals with alleged links or family ties to Da'esh were still being held. An estimated 42,500 individuals, including more than 17,700 Iraqi nationals, approximately 16,200 Syrian nationals, and 8,600 foreign nationals remained stranded in the Hawl and Rawj camps and in detention and other facilities, including "rehabilitation" centres. The population of these camps, of which 60 per cent are children, decreased only slightly since the previous report, when estimates stood at 44,000 individuals.

14. Individuals held in the camps and other facilities were unable to leave or challenge the lawfulness of their detention or placement. Men and boys in detention facilities were reportedly held (some incommunicado) in overcrowded cells, with insufficient food and healthcare. With few exceptions, humanitarian actors were not permitted contact or engagement with individual children in prisons and in detention and other facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. Member States remained concerned over the fate of these individuals, especially as places of detention became less well secured since the fall of the Syrian government on 8 December. In Iraq, many children have been convicted of terrorist offences and sentenced to a maximum prison term of 15 years.

15. Living conditions at the Hawl and Rawj camps remained dire, and Hawl in particular was severely overcrowded, with limited services and inadequate shelter. Children have not accessed school for many years. Detainees continued to face insecurity and violence, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, and there were reports of attacks against humanitarian workers.

III. Updates on responses to the evolving threat

16. The United Nations continued to advise and assist Member States in their efforts to counter the threat posed by Da'esh, including to strengthen border security, rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees and provide support for victims of terrorism. New initiatives were focused on regions facing growing instability. In the Sahel, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched new projects focused on preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism and supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of adults and adolescents.

17. On behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, its Executive Directorate conducted visits to Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mauritania, Turkmenistan and the United Republic of Tanzania to assess the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and subsequent related resolutions. In Africa, these assessments served to address the expanding terrorism threat in the Sahel and its impact on regional stability. The Executive Directorate observed progress in policy and institutional reforms undertaken in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana based on recommendations from the Committee's previous visits in 2018 and 2019, including on enhancing whole-of-government approaches to counter terrorism and address the conditions conducive to terrorism.

18. On 3 December, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate hosted a technical meeting to mark the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), raising awareness of the need for comprehensive approaches to counter the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters. At the meeting, representatives of United Nations entities, Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society and academia emphasized the need for enhanced policy effectiveness, in accordance with international law, and highlighted the impact of international cooperation while identifying implementation gaps to guide future efforts of Member States and United Nations entities.

A. Addressing the situation of suspected Da'esh members and their family members in conflict zones

1. Repatriation efforts

19. The pace of repatriations declined significantly during the reporting period, with information that only five Member States had repatriated more than 760 individuals in total from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Among these Member States, the Government of Iraq repatriated approximately 400 Iraqi children from the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic to a rehabilitation centre in Iraq.

20. UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other United Nations entities continued their work to address barriers to repatriation, including the lack of civil and identification documents. Their work also supported the implementation of programmes to advance community-based reintegration, prevent discrimination and stigmatization and facilitate access to basic social services. IOM provided legal support to more than 1,800 individuals in camps and other facilities and areas of return, in particular the Anbar Governorate in Iraq.

21. In response to needs identified under the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq Third Country National Returnees, the European Union-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility, managed by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, continued to support Iraq between July and December through the provision of advisory services, training, and information technology equipment to assist with the registration and screening of adult individuals seeking voluntary repatriation from the Hawl camp.

2. Prosecution and investigation

22. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to monitor Member State prosecutions for terrorism offences and assisted Member States in developing counter-terrorism legislation. In June, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism expressed concerns regarding counter-terrorism laws in Iraq, highlighting that executions of prisoners, including those accused of terrorism-related offences, were often based on confessions obtained under torture and ambiguous legal provisions. The Special Rapporteur called upon the Government of Iraq to halt executions and ensure fair retrials for individuals on death row, in compliance with international human rights standards. The United Nations observed that Iraq continued to execute prisoners convicted and sentenced under its counter-terrorism laws, recording 10 executions in July and 21 executions, including of one woman, in September.

23. The mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) ended in September. Throughout its mandate, UNITAD produced 19 case assessments and analytical reports regarding potential crimes against humanity, war

crimes and genocide committed by Da'esh, contributing to the collection and archiving of millions of pieces of information that could be used as evidence in future criminal proceedings. At least 18 cases supported by UNITAD led to indictments, and subsequently 15 convictions.

24. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights monitored the trials of six detainees in Iraq, as part of their efforts to promote fair trial rights in criminal and terrorism cases. The detainees, all adult men, are suspected of involvement in Da'esh crimes, of whom three were transferred from detention facilities in the northeast of the Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq.

25. The Office of Counter-Terrorism, in cooperation with the Office of the National Security Adviser of Iraq, provided training to investigators from four Iraqi counter-terrorism entities on human rights-compliant practices, focusing on the prohibition of torture and the lawful use of force. The Office of Counter-Terrorism also shared guidance with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights on recent international human rights law developments applicable to counter-terrorism, enabling it to enhance training for security forces. In December 2024, the Office of Counter-Terrorism organized a workshop on integrating international legal standards and good practices in screening and initial assessment processes for government agencies involved in the repatriation of individuals from Hawl camp.

26. In Uganda, the European Union-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility continued to mentor and support the development of a joint national training for the Uganda Police Force and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to strengthen national coordination in investigating and prosecuting terrorism-related cases. In Malawi, the Facility provided expert advice, together with UNODC and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, to the Malawi Law Commission on both substantive offences and criminal procedure relating to terrorism cases, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions, international counter-terrorism conventions, and international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law. The Facility also finalized a study to assist the Law Commission in considering how to strengthen national inter-agency coordination on counter-terrorism, in view of the practices of other African Member States.

3. Rehabilitation and reintegration

27. The United Nations continued to support Member States with the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals associated with terrorist groups. In Mozambique, UNODC assisted authorities with developing tailored rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in prisons. UNODC organized a high-level visit of representatives of Maldives to the Netherlands and European Union institutions to exchange knowledge and good practices and raise awareness of the latest observed trends and challenges in preventing and countering terrorism, including the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters and their families. In Malaysia, UNODC supported 30 prison officials in preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism in prisons through knowledge exchange on international standards, good practices and challenges relating to rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

28. In Central Asia, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), convened the first meeting of the working groups of the Central Asia Regional Expert Council on the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees from Conflict Zones, in July, aimed at strengthening whole-of-society engagement in different thematic areas related to the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. The Office of Counter-

Terrorism, in coordination with the Regional Centre and OSCE, supported the organization of the second meeting of the Regional Expert Council, in November, focused specifically on civil society-led rehabilitation and reintegration practices among Central Asian States. In December, to address current and emerging trends in regional and international cooperation and identify areas for enhanced technical assistance, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Regional Centre and the Government of Uzbekistan held a high-level briefing in New York on the Central Asia Regional Expert Council.

29. In the Lake Chad basin, UNICEF provided support to affected children, including family-based alternative care, reunification, mental health and psychosocial support, as well as to enhance community reintegration. In the Niger, UNICEF provided community-based socioeconomic reintegration services resulting in the opening of government-managed skills training centres to increase economic reintegration options for adolescents. UNICEF continued to support Chad, the Niger and Nigeria in efforts to implement handover protocols to facilitate the quick transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups from security forces to civilian child protection actors.

B. International and regional cooperation

30. Promoting multilateral cooperation, including with international and regional organizations, to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism remained a priority for the United Nations. The European Union-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility provided capacity-building support to Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Tajikistan and Uganda and initiated support to Maldives and Mauritania, at their request and on the basis of technical assistance needs identified by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. The support was focused on detecting, preventing, responding to and investigating terrorist threats.

31. At the ministerial meeting of the international counter-Da'esh coalition, held in Washington, D.C., in September, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate presented United Nations tools to enhance multilateral cooperation in countering Da'esh and its affiliates and encouraged Member States to strengthen United Nations counter-terrorism efforts, particularly in Africa. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General participated in a side event, calling upon Member States to urgently repatriate their citizens from the Hawl and Rawj camps.

32. In November, a high-level conference on strengthening international counter-terrorism cooperation and building agile border security mechanisms was co-organized in Kuwait City by the Governments of Kuwait and Tajikistan and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, as part of the Dushanbe process on countering terrorism and its financing. The conference expanded the Dushanbe process beyond Central Asia to include Member States from the League of Arab States, Africa and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It also reaffirmed commitments of Member States to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the Pact for the Future and relevant Security Council resolutions. Through the adoption of the Kuwait Declaration on Border Security and Management, Governments emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation, the adoption of innovative border security measures and the integration of human rights into counter-terrorism frameworks and agreed on enhanced international and regional coordination to address terrorism.

C. Coordination and coherence across United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities

33. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, comprising 46 entities after the end of the mandate of UNITAD, continued to serve to coordinate United Nations efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism through a One United Nations approach. The Compact digital platform continued to support coordination, engagement and information exchange among more than 1,050 focal points from 137 Member States, 14 regional organizations and all 46 member and observer entities.

D. Supporting the victims of Da'esh

34. Survivor-centred approaches remained central to United Nations efforts to support victims and survivors of violence committed by Da'esh, including sexual and gender-based violence. In August, the United Nations observed the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism. The Office of Counter-Terrorism hosted a high-level event, which underscored the importance of recognizing the role of victims and survivors as advocates and educators, as outlined in General Assembly resolution 72/165.

35. On 8 and 9 October, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, co-hosted, with the Government of Spain, the International Conference on Victims of Terrorism on the theme "Education as a tool for prevention, peacebuilding and empowerment of victims of terrorism". A total of 432 participants from 66 countries, including 59 victims and survivors, 62 civil society members and 42 representatives of international and regional organizations, reviewed progress in amplifying the voices of victims and survivors, fostering collaboration, strengthening networks and ensuring government-led support.

36. In November 2024, the Office of Counter-Terrorism launched the pilot project of the Model Legislative Provisions to Support the Needs and Protect the Rights of Victims of Terrorism in Nigeria. Developed with UNODC and in collaboration with the Government of Nigeria, the project provides technical assistance to protect and support terrorism victims, encouraging Member States to strengthen mechanisms and adopt good practices.

37. Having supported the implementation of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors in Iraq in 2021, the United Nations continued to work with Iraqi authorities to aid victims, which by October 2024 had resulted in more than 2,000 approved applications for reparation benefits, over 1,000 of which relate to women and girl survivors of sexual or gender-based violence.

E. Border management and law enforcement

38. The United Nations initiated several new projects with Member States to improve border management and law enforcement processes to counter terrorism. The European Union-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility and the Office of Counter-Terrorism's Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Use of Weapons collaborated in Tajikistan to strengthen, through the provision of training and equipment, the capacity of the border troops and the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Safety and Security Agency to counter the illicit smuggling of nuclear and radiological materials across the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border.

39. The Office of Counter-Terrorism, through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, continued to build capacities of Member States to counter the acquisition and use of weapons by terrorists, training more than 160 officials from 19 Member States. In October, the Centre delivered radiation detection equipment and trained 28 personnel from the border security services of Tajikistan on technical and operational aspects of nuclear security. In the same month, the Centre organized a high-level briefing to Member States from Africa and Central Asia to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution 2370 (2017) on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons with a focus on small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive devices and unmanned aircraft systems. Together with UNODC, the Centre provided training in November to officials from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on the collection and use of specific evidence in cases related to trafficking in small arms and light weapons and terrorism and provided equipment to increase the capacities of forensic laboratories in these countries to support investigations in this field. During the reporting period, the Centre strengthened the capacities of 50 officials working on counter-terrorism, disarmament and non-proliferation in South Asia, South-east Asia and North Africa to develop their own tabletop exercises and exercise programmes with the goal of preventing terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. In December, the Centre trained 25 security officials from Iraq to enhance their capacities to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks involving biological weapons or materials.

40. Following years of engagement and technical assistance from UNODC and OSCE, a new law was adopted in Uzbekistan in August 2024 that facilitates cross-border evidence requests while respecting individual rights. The adoption and implementation of the law was followed by training programmes, including with support from IOM and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), as well as technical guidance published by, among others, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the International Association of Prosecutors and UNODC.

41. As part of a project, IOM provided equipment and infrastructure to the Government of Iraq to enhance border management in support of counter-terrorism efforts. IOM deployed mobile border-processing units with Migration Information and Data Analysis System technology to increase security at major crossing points and allow for better monitoring along high-risk borders. These upgrades to communications systems, roads, X-ray devices and document examination laboratories at major airports, combined with capacity-building initiatives for Iraqi officials, have contributed to improved border security in Iraq and helped to combat terrorism, as well as organized crime, smuggling and trafficking.

42. An example of efforts to ensure One United Nations delivery at the nexus between security and development during the reporting period was the Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets, implemented by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. The Programme delivered technical assistance to Member States, particularly in West Africa, resulting in national action plans on vulnerable targets protection for Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Senegal. This was complemented by capacity-building activities, supported by resident coordinators and various United Nations entities. The Programme also developed initiatives on safeguarding religious sites, co-led by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and on tourism security, co-led by UNICRI. By strengthening the capacities of Member States to effectively protect vulnerable targets, the Programme contributed to efforts to develop and preserve economic assets

and activities indispensable for sustainable development, addressing in turn some of conditions conducive to terrorism.

43. The Programme produced a technical guide on protecting critical energy infrastructure, which was informed by consultations with the Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact. The Programme expanded its Global Network of Experts on Vulnerable Targets Protection, engaging Member States, civil society, private sector, academia and United Nations experts through initiatives such as technical briefings on urban security, co-led by the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

44. The United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme continued to strengthen Member States' border management and threat detection capabilities. On 19 July, the Programme and Hungary jointly hosted an event in Budapest to celebrate the fifth anniversary and concrete results of this flagship One United Nations capacity-building initiative launched by the Secretary-General in 2019. During the reporting period, in collaboration with partners including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, INTERPOL, IOM and UNODC, the Programme provided tailored support to 82 beneficiary countries. Activities included capacity-building to enhance the collection, analysis and use of passenger data in line with international standards and human rights principles. Regional efforts included workshops and study visits for informal working groups in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, West and Central Africa and South-East Asia.

45. In September, the Countering Terrorist Travel Programme held a workshop in Nairobi for East African Member States, which enhanced regional cooperation and coordination on passenger data exchange between Member States and contributed to cross-regional engagement supported by the operationalization of a global informal working group network. At the national level, training activities were held in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Malawi, while passenger information units were established in Botswana, Georgia, Mongolia and Norway. The Programme also focused efforts to enhance awareness and understanding of international standards and recommended practices relating to passenger data privacy and data protection by delivering workshops to participants from Algeria, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and Morocco, in line with international human rights norms and obligations.

46. During the reporting period, the Global Fusion Cells Programme of the Office of Counter-Terrorism continued to deliver training in support of African Member States. Training on ethical questioning, intelligence writing and fusion cell management was conducted for 35 participants from 13 Member States, enhancing skills in elicitation, reporting and fusion centre management with integrated human rights and gender considerations. A three-week train-the-trainer course was conducted in collaboration with United Nations Police, through which 20 officials from eight Member States were certified to deliver counter-terrorism training nationally. In the course, human rights and gender-responsive approaches were emphasized, embedding sustainable expertise within institutions and reinforcing rights-compliant counter-terrorism practices.

F. Countering the financing of terrorism

47. The United Nations forged new partnerships to enhance its support for Member States in their efforts to counter the financing of terrorism. In September, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in collaboration with the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and the Federal Financial Monitoring Service of the Russian Federation (Rosfinmonitoring), and with the expert contribution of the

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, launched a handbook containing practical guidance, based on practices of States members of the Eurasian Group, to support law enforcement agencies in identifying, investigating and confiscating tainted cryptocurrencies used for terrorism financing purposes.[8] The handbook is aimed at providing Member States with access to effective practices and workable solutions while ensuring a more coordinated and harmonized approach to combating the misuse of virtual assets for terrorist financing purposes.

48. During the reporting period, the Office of Counter-Terrorism continued to assist the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group in implementing its regional operational plan for countering terrorism financing, supporting the ongoing terrorism-financing regional risk assessment with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia and facilitating the Group's seventh public-private sector dialogue with the participation of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

49. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate provided high-level support for the symposium of Beijing Normal University's College for Criminal Law Science and School of Law on combating the financing of terrorism and facilitating international counter-terrorism cooperation. The symposium served to raise awareness of region-specific challenges in countering terrorism financing and provide law enforcement and policymakers from the region with the latest research.

50. In November, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate published a report detailing changes in financial flows related to foreign terrorist fighter travel and activities over the 10 years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014).[9] Expert discussions, hosted to launch the publication, raised awareness of Da'esh's adaptability, including the decentralization of its financing operations, the growing sophistication of its financing methods, and shifts in related expenditures. The analysis will also inform the work of the Financial Action Task Force on its comprehensive update on global terrorism-financing risks (co-led by the Government of France and the Executive Directorate).

51. In Mozambique, UNODC continued to deliver technical assistance, including on-the-job training to more than 1,100 judicial officials on detecting, prosecuting and adjudicating terrorism and terrorism-financing offences.

G. Impact of information and communications technologies and new technologies on counter-terrorism

52. United Nations entities continued to assist Member States in countering the threat posed by terrorist use of new and emerging technologies while identifying ways to harness technological advancements to counter terrorism through a human rights-based approach. The European Union-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility provided technical advice and facilitated a study visit for the Ministry of Justice of Kyrgyzstan to enhance digital forensic capabilities for counter-terrorism cases while ensuring compliance with the rule of law and international human rights standards. In Kenya, the Facility supported the National Counter-Terrorism Centre in

[8] Available at www.un.org/counterterrorism/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/uncct_cft_va_report_2024_en.pdf.

[9] Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, "Trends tracker – evolving trends in the financing of foreign terrorist fighters' activity: 2014 – 2024", November 2024, available at www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/cted_trends_tracker_evolving_trends_in_the_financing_of_foreign_terrorist_fighters_activity_2014_-_2024.pdf.

enhancing its capacities to monitor and analyse open-source information in support of its counter-terrorism efforts.

53. In November 2024, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre within the Office of Counter-Terrorism, through its Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Cybersecurity and New Technologies, launched the CT TECH+ initiative in collaboration with INTERPOL and with the support of the European Union. The initiative is aimed at providing tailored support to requesting Member States in improving their response to the increased misuse of new technologies for terrorist purposes while protecting human rights and promoting gender-responsive approaches to addressing the exploitation and manipulation by terrorists of gender inequalities and norms.

54. During the reporting period, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, through its Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Autonomous and Remotely Operated Systems, built the capacity of more than 100 officials from Malaysia and Senegal on unmanned aircraft system threats and on the safe, secure and non-lethal use of such systems for counter-terrorism purposes, including through an awareness-raising conference, three unmanned aircraft system operator courses and two unmanned aircraft system operator training-of-trainers courses. The support to Senegal included the first in-depth national consultations on such systems conducted by the Programme in collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to assist in the development of a national road map to counter the threat posed by the use of unmanned aircraft systems by terrorists.

H. Countering terrorist narratives and engaging with communities to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism

55. The United Nations continued to provide Member States with a range of capacity-building initiatives and technical assistance to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism and to support their engagement with various stakeholders, in line with whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, including in the development of counter-terrorist narratives. To address an increase in terrorist recruitment in the Sahel, UNODC launched a regional youth-focused network for the prevention of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Building on lessons learned from delivering similar initiatives in Central Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia, the network brings together government and civil society to share good practices.

56. IOM continued its support to the Government of Iraq for the implementation of its national countering violent extremism strategy. During the reporting period, IOM trained service providers in rehabilitation facilities, families in areas of return and local leaders with specialized knowledge on engagement with individuals affected by violent extremism. Moreover, IOM developed a peace education programme to promote social cohesion and counter violent extremist narratives, reaching more than 5,000 boys and girls and 300 teachers in the Governorates of Ninawa, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din in 2024.

57. The United Nations Development Programme partnered with the Government of Iraq to strengthen local capacities for preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism in seven governorates. The project included developing and implementing plans of action, which are aimed at localizing national strategies to prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism. In July, the Programme provided training to local civil society organizations on preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism in a human rights-based manner. This initiative empowered local non-governmental

organizations to contribute to the prevention of violent extremism conducive to terrorism at the community level.

58. The Office of Counter-Terrorism's Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, together with the European Union-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility, finalized support to the National Counter-Terrorism Centre of Kenya in developing a national approach to strategic communication and a monitoring and evaluation framework for the implementation of the Government's National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism.

59. In November, the Office of Counter-Terrorism's Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism organized the Doha Youth Parliamentary Forum on the theme "Promoting youth perspectives in parliamentary responses to terrorism and violent extremism". The Forum complemented the Office of Counter-Terrorism's broader efforts on youth engagement and is aimed at integrating youth perspectives into parliamentary discussions on counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

60. The Office of Counter-Terrorism's Global Programme on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism continued to focus on empowering young leaders to counter the influence of Da'esh-affiliated terrorist groups in Africa through the Youth Engagement and Empowerment Programme, which began in Nigeria in August 2023. Activities under this initiative directly shaped the policy recommendations put forward at the regional dialogue held in August 2024, at which young leaders from Kenya, Nigeria and Somalia shared their proposals with regional stakeholders, advancing collaboration and youth-informed policy frameworks.

IV. Observations

61. The severity of the threat posed by Da'esh remains concerning. Despite steady progress by Member States and international partners in targeting Da'esh leadership and financial operations, the group continues to demonstrate resilience and adapt its modus operandi. While Da'esh maintains a reduced pace of activity in Iraq, there is a risk of the group exploiting the volatile situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to strengthen its position. To mitigate such a risk, the political transition ahead – guided by the principles of Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and managed by the Syrians themselves, with the support of the United Nations and the international community – requires carefully integrating comprehensive counter-terrorism approaches that promote and protect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and respect for human rights for all and the rule of law, as emphasized in the Pact for the Future. In this regard, to overcome the long-term impact of terrorism, any political transition must seek access to justice, truth and reparation and ensure due support to victims of terrorism.

62. I am alarmed by the ongoing insecurity and violence and human rights violations affecting the thousands of individuals, mostly women and children, who remain stranded in prisons, camps and other facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. I remain deeply concerned about the dire situation faced by these individuals, including unaccompanied or orphaned children, which may be exacerbated by the prevailing volatility in the country. As stipulated in Security Council resolution 2427 (2018), children should be treated primarily as victims. I urge Member States to comply with applicable obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and encourage access for civilian child protection actors to children deprived of liberty for association with armed groups. I call upon all relevant authorities to continue to make every necessary effort to protect civilians and ensure

security and access to humanitarian services for those individuals, in particular in the Hawl and Rawj camps. Recent successful repatriations and subsequent prosecutions show that States have the capacity to ensure that their nationals are treated with dignity and afforded due process and a fair trial or rehabilitation, thereby promoting accountability. Facilitating safe, voluntary and dignified repatriations should remain a priority. I reiterate my repeated calls upon, and my commitment to supporting Member States with nationals in these facilities to significantly boost their efforts to facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of all those individuals to their countries of nationality or origin, in line with Member States' respective obligations under international law.

63. The situation in Afghanistan remains concerning, with ISIL-K continuing to represent a threat not only to the country but also to the region and beyond. I continue to call upon all Member States to unite to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a hotbed of terrorist activities affecting other countries.

64. I am gravely concerned about the sustained terrorist threat in parts of Africa. Da'esh continues to focus its activities on the continent, and its affiliates remain intent on expanding their control over territory and populations while leveraging opportunities to raise funds. The increasing terrorist activity across different regions continues to pose not only a significant threat to international peace and security but also enormous challenges for sustainable development and the protection of human rights. I call upon Member States to enhance their efforts to comprehensively address the drivers and consequences of terrorism in parts of Africa, including through whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.

65. The sustained high level of the threat posed by Da'esh, despite significant counter-terrorism efforts in the past several years, is a constant reminder of the limits of security-centred approaches against terrorism. While these measures, when fully compliant with international law and human rights standards, are necessary, they must be accompanied by comprehensive approaches that not only counter the threat but also prevent it from emerging or reemerging. Prevention remains the best course of action to protect people sustainably from the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. I therefore continue to encourage Member States to consider developing and adequately investing in regional and national prevention strategies, grounded in sustainable development and the creation of opportunities and livelihoods in line with the mandate to leave no one behind, that are aimed at addressing terrorism and other forms of violence, centred on the rule of law and human rights and based on whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches.

66. As terrorism continues to pose a global threat, I welcome the adoption of the Pact for the Future, in particular the commitment by Member States to pursue a future free from terrorism and to redouble their efforts to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, prevent and combat terrorism, address the threats posed by the misuse of new and emerging technologies, build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism, and strengthen the coordination role of the United Nations system. In line with their primary responsibility to counter terrorism, I urge Member States to transform those commitments into action.

67. The United Nations, including through its Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, will continue to support Member States in their efforts to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, including in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions, within the framework of international law. I call upon Member States to continue collaborating with the United Nations, including through voluntary contributions essential for the provision of capacity-building and technical assistance.

Annex

Thirty-fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2734 (2024) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities

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