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United Nations

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

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

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

### **Co-Chairs' Summary 14 June 2013; Geneva, Switzerland**

The *International Counter-Terrorism Focal Points Conference on Addressing Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism and on Promoting Regional Cooperation*, held on 13 – 14 June 2013 at the United Nations Office at Geneva, was co-organized by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office of the United Nations and the Government of Switzerland. The Conference was opened and co-chaired by Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations and Chairman of the CTITF and H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter, Vice-President of the Federal Council and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. Vice-President Mr. Burkhalter also delivered a keynote statement at the Opening Session. The Conference was attended by over 350 participants, representing 130 United Nations Member States, 15 international and regional organizations and 15 civil society members.

The Conference is an important international event to further the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy at the national and regional levels. It follows other activities carried out by Member States, United Nations entities and key international and regional organizations since the adoption of the Strategy in September 2006. The Conference built on the results of four regional workshops in Indonesia, Ethiopia, Namibia, and Bangladesh. The workshops took place over the last 30 months and were organized by the CTITF Office, in partnership with a select group of regional States and relevant CTITF entities, and were supported by the Governments of Austria, Germany, Norway, Turkey, Switzerland and the United States. A fifth regional workshop under the same initiative is expected to take place in Nigeria in July 2013.

The Conference had three main objectives:

(1) to bring together counter-terrorism focal points in order to advance reflections on the strategic context in which Pillar I topics need to be prioritized for programming and implementation by Member States, regional organizations and civil society members;

(2) to identify ways and develop partnerships to strengthen regional cooperation to further the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; and  
(3) to emphasize the integrated nature of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, particularly the interdependence that exists between conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and other pillars of the Strategy.

Some of the key elements from the proceedings of the Conference are:

1. Member States, representatives of regional and sub-regional organizations, United Nations offices and agencies and civil society reaffirmed their confidence in and support for the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy as the universally accepted policy framework. The comprehensive and integrated implementation at the national and regional levels of the Strategy is vital in the global fight against terrorism.

2. Participants recognized the important role of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) in bringing together relevant United Nations entities and international organizations to enhance coordination and coherence on multilateral counter-terrorism activities and support Member States in the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Participants also called for further strengthening coordination among the United Nations counter-terrorism partners.

3. In many regions, terrorism is a trans-boundary threat and therefore requires coordinated responses of the States of the region concerned. Terrorist financing through drugs and arms trafficking was mentioned as such an emerging cross-border phenomenon. Participants heard about the challenges posed by terrorism in Africa and Asia in particular. The nature, levels and mechanics of regional counter-terrorism cooperation vary across regions. Regional organizations can play a useful role in supporting such implementation through consensus-building, establishment of professional or technical coordination and information-exchange mechanisms, as well as practical cooperation in police, border and legal matters. Participants stressed the role of the United Nations as a partner in enhancing regional links and in offering a multilateral platform.

4. In order to effectively fight terrorism, development and respect for human rights must be linked with the security dimension. Development and security are mutually reinforcing. Education, good governance and economic opportunities help in preventing terrorism and extremism. Greater national capacity is therefore required for furthering development. At the same time, a secure environment is one of the pre-requisites for promoting development. Protecting human rights and ensuring respect for the rule of law contribute to preventing terrorism.

5. A functioning and human rights-compliant criminal justice system is vital for a secure environment and promoting development. Building credible public institutions is essential. The prosecution of perpetrators of terrorist acts, in compliance with human rights law, is critical to both preventing and combating terrorism.

6. A counterterrorism approach that excludes communities can be a driver for radicalization that leads to terrorism. Conversely, an inclusive approach to civil society contributes to reducing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

7. While the Strategy has a global scope, counter-terrorism efforts need to be tailored to local realities. Partnerships with civil society organizations and institutions operating at the grassroots level are therefore critical. Civil society can play a significant multiplier role in advancing global counter-terrorism objectives, particularly on issues of prevention.

8. Preserving basic liberties and countering extremism cannot be considered as mutually exclusive. As many countries have demonstrated, counter-terrorism measures should co-exist with the protection of the operational space for civil society, which has intrinsic value with regard to the implementation of the Global Strategy. While terrorist abuses of civil liberties for the purposes of incitement and recruitment are appropriate areas for government concern and potential action, governments also need to promote the exercise of the rights to freedom of association, speech and assembly, and privacy, as guaranteed under UN human rights instruments.

9. Victims of terrorism, as part of civil society, can play a key role in preventing terrorism. The Strategy identifies the dehumanization of victims of terrorism as one of the key issues that generates the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. This is also true in cases of kidnapping for ransom, where human beings are reduced to 'financial commodities' for terrorist purposes.

10. Victims of terrorism are a constant reminder to the international community that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations committed by whomever and wherever is a threat to international peace and security, and development. International community can make concerted efforts to assist victims in their rehabilitations and protection of their rights.

11. Since the adoption of the Global Strategy, the voices of victims have been amplified beyond national borders. The UN and other international entities, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), have contributed significantly to address the needs of victims of terrorism. They should step up their efforts to provide, upon request, technical assistance for building the capacity of Member States in the development and implementation of programmes of assistance and support for victims of terrorism. It was further mentioned that a specific international instrument on the rights of victims of terrorism will strengthen international efforts towards an effective global counter-terrorism strategy.

12. Victims of terrorism deserve recognition in their own right. Their suffering should not be exploited. At the same time, one cannot ignore that the messages of victims may be crucial in countering the narrative of terrorism. The challenge here is to give victims a voice in ways that do not run counter to their own sentiments, values and interests.

13. To highlight the plight of victims of terrorism, support for their cause needs to be promoted. Developing and enhancing the skills, knowledge and capacity of victims of terrorism to interact with, engage, and discuss through various forms of the media, including through the use of both conventional and social media, will mitigate the effects of a terrorist attack. These messages, stories and experiences have to be shared with a larger audience, including vulnerable communities and groups, to counteract the messages of violent extremists.

14. Stereotyping, intolerance, conflicts, inequality, discrimination, social marginalization, political and economic exclusion and absence of good governance often provide the enabling environment for terrorism to grow. In such situations, law-enforcement and judicial measures alone do not suffice to counter terrorism, but need to be supplemented with more long-term measures to foster dialogue and understanding.

15. Participants stressed that addressing the provisions of Pillar I will need strengthened efforts to dispel the misunderstandings and misconceptions among peoples, cultures and religions by fostering a culture of dialogue and understanding towards building an alliance of civilizations. It will also require developing and implementing effective de-radicalization programmes for those who have already been radicalized.

Over the course of the two days, participants identified challenges, priorities and ways to move forward in the implementation of Pillar I of the United Nations Global Counterterrorism Strategy at the global, regional and local levels. Efforts need to be redoubled in achieving practical results on the ground in a coherent, coordinated and integrated manner. This requires continued dialogue and common action by all implementation partners at all levels.

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