

Adapting tools to combat terrorist threats

Well, thank you, Mr President, and let me, as always, thank our briefers today, Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Assistant Secretary-General Coninx, and Ms Freij for their presentations. And may I also thank the monitoring team for their very strong contribution to this report.

Mr President, let me say that we agree with the assessment set out in the Secretary-General's report. Al-Qaeda remains a destabilising influence. And while Daesh has lost territory, it remains a considerable threat, both militarily and politically. With the appointment of Baghdadi's successor and the emergence of strong affiliates and supporters from West Africa to Southeast Asia, their core narrative or brand continues. The United Kingdom will continue to work with Coalition partners to bring an end to Daesh once and for all.

The United Kingdom has been clear that individuals who have fought for or supported Daesh must face justice and accountability in the most appropriate jurisdiction, which is often in the region where crimes took place. We continue to pursue all available avenues with international partners and reaffirm the need to implement Security Council Resolution 2396. And in this regard, we welcome the unanimous renewal of UNITAD's mandate in September and very much support its work on supporting victims and collecting critical evidence to hold Daesh accountable for its horrific crimes.

On the subject of repatriations, the United Kingdom works with all concerned to facilitate the return of unaccompanied or orphaned children where feasible. Each case is considered on an individual basis, subject to national security concerns.

Mr President, as we adapt our tools, so do the terrorists. We were therefore pleased that recent resolutions reflect new methods of terrorist financing and links of criminality and welcomed the increased focus on the protection of principled humanitarian action. We encourage CTED and UNOCT to continue developing their work on this aspect.

Mr President, the Secretary-General's report illustrates the complex and multiple roles of women and the need to ensure gendered analysis and responses. And we heard today the brave testimony of Ms Freij and the invaluable contributions of women on the front lines. Ms Freij reminded us of the importance of ensuring that there is not only a security response to terrorism, there is a need also to build societies' resilience, including through civil society. It's important to win over hearts and minds, and a failure risks reversion to terrorism in the future. And I know that Under-Secretary-General Varonkov supports very strongly the role of civil society in tackling terrorism.

Mr President, following the recent CTED visit to Beijing, we commend CTED for

completing assessment visits now to all permanent members of this Council, as well, of course, to many of its current and previous, and I dare I say it, future members. We welcome CTED's constructive engagement in facilitating these visits and that of those members of this United Nations. The United Kingdom, for its part, invited a second follow-up seated visit in October last year, covering a robust and comprehensive agenda. It's important that these visits are not simply for show, but produce detailed reports and recommendations which can aid our counter-terrorism approaches.

The United Kingdom has sadly faced two attacks in recent months from Daesh-inspired terrorism. And I want to pay tribute today to members of the public and police in the United Kingdom who confronted those terrorists and prevented greater harm. The UK would ensure we take measures to tackle all forms of terrorism, including from the extreme right wing. And as we continue to review our own report from CTED and with CTED, we expect that all visited states will work towards finalisation of their report.

Mr President, the Secretary-General's report rightly highlights the importance of respect for human rights in effective counter-terrorism policies. Indeed, the Council has repeatedly stressed the importance of human rights in counter-terrorism and determined early on through policy guidance in 2006 that human rights is an important component of CTED's work. We also commend UN entities for their many initiatives, ensuring that measures to prevent violent extremism integrate human rights and gender as cross-cutting issues. We continue, in that context, to have strong concerns regarding the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including: the extrajudicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in so-called political re-education camps; systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam; and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities, much of which has been revealed in the Chinese government's own papers. We recognise, of course, that China may have terrorism concerns, but it is our view that its actions are disproportionate and indiscriminate, and moreover, that they will be counter-productive in the long term because they risk exacerbating ethnic tensions and creating conditions that lead to radicalisation and terrorism. I note that Under-Secretary-General Voronkov visited China and went to Xinjiang, but he did not have access to the camps, and that such a visit was not on CTED's agenda. We therefore encourage China to agree an early date for a visit by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Bachelet and to guarantee her free and unfettered access to Xinjiang.

I would just say, Mr President, that I was a little surprised to hear my distinguished Chinese colleague say that the Security Council was not an appropriate forum for discussion of Xinjiang. At the Security Council meeting on 25th of September 2019 under the Russian presidency, State Councillor Wang Yi proactively raised the situation in Xinjiang and described China's actions both as, I quote, preventive counter-terrorism, and, I quote again, implementing the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. He spoke third that day after Kuwait and Belgium, neither of whose representatives had raised Xinjiang in their interventions. So it was a choice of China to place the issue on our table here.

Mr President, I do not wish to revisit yesterday's meeting. That will take us

far too long. But I would just say to the distinguished Russian representative that tackling terrorism cannot ever be and is not an excuse or a reason for widespread attacks on civilians or for breaching international law.

Mr President, in conclusion, the terrorist threat is constantly evolving and we must be ready to adapt our tools. However, one constant remains that human rights and counter-terrorism are mutually reinforcing and not contradictory goals. This Council has developed a robust and balanced counter-terrorism framework through its resolutions. We should continue our collective efforts to ensure that the measures we take do not contribute to exacerbating future challenges.

Thank you, Mr President.