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Provisional

President: Mrs. Frazier (Malta)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
Switzerland	Mrs. Chanda
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Sixteenth 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 (S/2023/76)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Sixteenth 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 (S/2023/76)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, Office of Counter-Terrorism; Mr. Weixiong Chen, Acting Executive Director, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; and Ms. Franziska Praxl, Director of Multilateral Relations, Global Center on Cooperative Security.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/76, which contains the sixteenth 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 now give the floor to Mr. Voronkov.

Mr. Voronkov: I thank the Security Council for the opportunity to provide a briefing to it today.

As I present the sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security and the United Nations counter-terrorism efforts in support of Member States (S/2023/76), it is important that we remember the impact that this terrorist organization has on human lives, livelihoods and peace.

In September last year, the Office of Counter-Terrorism organized in New York the first United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism. That high-level event began with a powerful call to action by 10 victims and survivors of terrorism from around the world, who shared their heart-wrenching stories of pain and loss but also of resilience and steadfastness in

the face of sheer brutality and evil. They reminded us of the trauma and destruction that terrorism leaves long after an attack is over.

I regularly meet with victims of terrorism. Their stories have a profound impact on me, because beyond the headlines and behind the numbers, there are many people and communities who were affected by the heinous crimes of Da'esh and other terrorist groups and individuals. Engaging with and addressing the plight of victims and survivors provides us with a compelling reason to support and strengthen our collective efforts to confront and defeat terrorism. It also serves as an impetus to keep strengthening multilateral and inter-agency networks, including at the United Nations through the Secretary-General's Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.

I am pleased to be joined today by Mr. Weixiong Chen, Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, to present this report, which our offices prepared jointly with the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. I would like to thank Mr. Justin Hustwitt, Coordinator of the Monitoring Team, for his contribution in the preparation of the report, his first in this new role. And I look forward to building on our common efforts throughout his term.

Allow me to highlight a few key takeaways from the report, against the background of trends observed in the past two years.

The report asserts that, despite leadership losses and expenses that are diminishing its cash reserves, the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security remains high and has increased in and around conflict zones in which the group and its affiliates are active.

The expansion of Da'esh and its affiliates is particularly worrying in Central and Southern Africa, as well as in the Sahel. The Secretary-General's reports have dutifully recorded this unfortunate trend, which should prompt us all to rethink and revise our efforts to counter the group, especially those that rely disproportionately on the use of force.

Previous reports raised concerns about an increased risk of attacks in non-conflict areas by unaffiliated lone actors and small cells inspired by Da'esh as pandemic-related restrictions eased. While that has not materialized over this reporting period, the

level of terrorist activity continues to be a concern to Member States.

For example, Da'esh continues to use the Internet and social media, video games and gaming-adjacent platforms to extend the reach of its propaganda to radicalize and recruit new supporters. The group's use of new and emerging technologies also remains a key concern. Da'esh continues to use unmanned aerial systems for surveillance and reconnaissance, and uses virtual assets to raise funds.

Despite repeated calls by the Secretary-General for urgent action, the dire situation in camps and detention facilities in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic persists. The humanitarian, human rights, legal and security risks associated with the status quo have potentially far-reaching consequences in the medium to long term. The pace of repatriations remains too slow, and children continue to bear the brunt of this catastrophe.

At the same time, the challenge of foreign terrorist fighters and their family members is not restricted to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. It is a global challenge. Foreign terrorist fighters move between different theatres of conflict. In addition, the list of issues for when they return extends from accountability and prosecution for suspected crimes to managing associated family members, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration.

Foreign terrorist fighters with battlefield experience relocating to their homes or to third countries further compounds the threat. As noted in the report, terrorist attacks committed by such individuals have proven to be particularly lethal compared to those committed by purely home-grown terrorists. There are also some instances of radicalized women associated with Da'esh who reinvent themselves as recruiters, indoctrinating others, particularly children.

Looking ahead, the report offers three key observations for the Council's consideration.

First, the high-level threat posed by Da'esh and its affiliates, including their sustained expansion in parts of Africa, underscores the need for multidimensional approaches beyond security-centred responses. More complementarity is needed between security responses and preventive measures. The framework for ensuring such complementarity is offered by relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the United Nations

Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which this year is undergoing its eighth review. The United Nations will continue to work with Member States in order to ensure their effective, integrated and balanced implementation.

Secondly, such multidimensional approaches must be gender-sensitive and firmly anchored in international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and must reflect a broad range of views from various segments in societies affected by terrorism. In line with the Secretary-General's *A Call to Action for Human Rights*, human rights must be at the centre of the United Nations system's efforts to counter and prevent terrorism.

Thirdly, as the report points to an increased threat from terrorism in conflict zones, further efforts are necessary to address and prevent those conflicts in the first place. While terrorists exploit conflict dynamics, peace efforts are too often undermined and further complicated by terrorism. Better understanding the complex relationship between conflict and terrorism is a necessary step for devising more effective responses to those recurring challenges.

Referring to the New Agenda for Peace in his briefing to the General Assembly earlier this week (see A/77/PV.58), the Secretary-General said it must recognize the need for a new generation of peace-enforcement missions and counter-terrorism operations. The New Agenda will also outline possible actions for ensuring more effective responses to terrorism across the United Nations system.

The Abuja summit being organized later this year by the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Government of Nigeria will offer another opportunity for exploring options in the light of the deteriorating situation in parts of Africa, where terrorist fighters, funds and weapons are increasingly moving between regions, demanding a transcontinental approach.

The threat posed by Da'esh is a symptom of the convergence of risks and threats outlined by the Secretary-General in his *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) report. Countering that threat will continue to require our multilateral, collective and decisive efforts.

The President: I thank Mr. Voronkov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chen.

Mr. Chen: The threat that Da'esh and its affiliates pose globally has not diminished. They constitute a complex, evolving and enduring threat in both conflict and non-conflict zones. In the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/76), the following points are apparent.

First, Da'esh continues to exploit local fragilities and intercommunal tensions, particularly in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and parts of the African continent, in particular to boost terrorist recruitment.

Secondly, as noted by Under-Secretary-General Voronkov in his remarks just now, Da'esh, years after suffering its losses, has sustained its ability to carry out operations across diverse regions and expand its base of affiliated entities, notably in parts of Central, Southern and Western Africa. The visit of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to Nigeria in October confirmed that assessment.

Thirdly, generating revenue and fundraising have become critical for Da'esh. That is conducted through a wide range of ways, including extortion, looting, smuggling, taxation, soliciting donations and kidnapping for ransom. We have also seen an increased use of social media and gaming platforms as a means to raise money, while unregistered informal cash-transfer networks and mobile money services continue to be the dominant means of moving money.

Finally, the group's access to conventional and improvised weapons, including components of unmanned aircraft systems and information and communications technologies continue to contribute to the terrorist menace. Using improvised, stolen or illegally trafficked weapons, Da'esh has launched lethal attacks against a range of targets. The group's access to information and communications technologies allows it to diversify its tactics. Its misuse of the Internet and social media platforms for propaganda increases its ability to access audiences and incite violence among followers.

There are also other aspects of concern. The speed at which foreign nationals — women, men, children and the elderly — with alleged links to Da'esh in camps and prisons in north-eastern Syria are being repatriated to their countries of origin continues to be protracted. Such conditions provide Da'esh with ongoing opportunities to recruit from camps and prisons and facilitate radicalization to violence and the spread of terrorism.

The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) continues to implement its mandate, in line with resolution 2617 (2021), to counter the complex threat of Da'esh and its affiliates. Through country assessment visits, as well as the analysis of emerging trends, issues and developments, CTED facilitates Member States' understanding of the evolving threat and their implementation of the provisions of the relevant Council resolutions.

Finally, based on the Counter-Terrorism Committee's recommendations, CTED coordinates closely with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other partners of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact to support capacity-building activities in a range of thematic areas, such as the continued support of the Lake Chad basin countries to strengthen cross-border cooperation and develop comprehensive approaches to screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration.

The Counter-Terrorism Committee and CTED have also ramped up efforts to address the use of new and emerging technologies by terrorists. The Delhi Declaration, adopted by the Committee last October, calls for efforts to develop recommendations and non-binding guiding principles to assist Member States in implementing the relevant Council resolutions on countering terrorism and, specifically, the terrorist use of new and emerging technologies. CTED will provide its fullest support to the Committee in that regard.

(spoke in Chinese)

Only by working multilaterally and cooperatively will we succeed in mounting an effective response to the evolving global terrorist threat. To develop and implement effective counter-terrorism strategies and measures, it is vital that we apply a forward-looking, holistic and coordinated all-of-United-Nations approach. Our measures must be tailor-made, age- and gender-responsive and human rights-compliant.

CTED remains dedicated to supporting the Security Council and the Counter-Terrorism Committee in those endeavours while collaborating with all the relevant stakeholders and players.

The President: I thank Mr. Chen for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Praxl.

Ms. Praxl: I thank the Security Council very much for inviting me today to share some observations

regarding the importance of gender mainstreaming across all countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism efforts. My name is Franziska Praxl-Tabuchi, and I am the Director of Multilateral Relations at the Global Center on Cooperative Security.

I want to thank the Government of Malta for inviting me to brief the Council today on gender-responsive approaches to addressing terrorism. We recognize its efforts to secure a civil society briefer for today's meeting who operates at a local or a national level and the steps that it took to ensure their safety in the light of increased reprisals for both civil society and United Nations personnel, as seen most recently in the expulsion of the head of the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the pressure placed on the civil society briefer. No one should face retaliation for speaking out on human rights abuses. Indeed, the Security Council has a long history of being a forum for debate and action on such matters. Moreover, the perspectives of local civil society must inform this organ's decisions and the broader work of the United Nations, especially when those decisions affect those most affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism. We hope to see our local partners sitting in this seat next time, and we call on Council members and the United Nations system to support and safeguard their participation.

In addition to adding invaluable perspectives to the Council, local and national civil society have been instrumental in moving towards gender-sensitive policies in programmes and policies on countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism. Security Council resolutions and discussions have long emphasized the need to integrate a gender perspective into countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism approaches. They have also called for greater participation and leadership by women, amplified the work of women and women's organizations and addressed the role of gender stereotypes and masculinities. Similarly, the Secretary-General's 2015 Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) recommends that States Members of the United Nations mainstream gender perspectives across efforts to prevent violent extremism. Indeed, the Secretary-General's sixteenth report (S/2023/76) on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) reflects on the grave abuses against children and women, their significant representation in camps and detention

facilities and the need for gender- and age-sensitive approaches to their rehabilitation and reintegration.

Mainstreaming gender into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism measures is not just a matter of realizing the goal of the participation of women. It is about ensuring the inclusive and equitable participation and leadership of people of diverse gender identities. It requires accounting for the experiences, needs and challenges of individuals and recognizing how gender identities relate to other identity factors. Simply put, integrating a gender perspective is a prerequisite for successful human rights-based and people-centred policies and programmes intended to address peace and security issues, including those that seek to counter violent extremism and terrorism.

In that regard, tentative progress has been made, particularly in the promulgation of normative frameworks, resources and guidance documents. However, we see greater opportunities to move beyond the status quo by better understanding and addressing how gender identities intersect with other identity factors, including ethnicity, age, religion and geographic origin, and by operationalizing the existing guidance in countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism programmes and measures in partnership with local and regional civil society stakeholders to ensure their contextualization.

For the Council's consideration, and based on the Global Center's experience and diverse network of civil society partners, I will share a set of key principles that should inform more gender-sensitive, rights-based countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism approaches to addressing the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) and many other terrorist groups.

First, the do-no-harm principle and gender and conflict sensitivity must underpin all components of countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism policies and practices. Countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism policies and programmes must account for the complexity of drivers of insecurity beyond those posed by terrorism. They must avoid creating, or exacerbating, drivers of violence and, instead, make a positive contribution to peace and the promotion and protection of human rights. They must therefore be conflict-sensitive, uphold do-no-harm standards and account for the diverse needs, challenges

and risks to men, women, girls, boys and people of diverse gender and intersecting identities. Furthermore, the maintenance of strong, independent institutions of oversight and accountability over justice and security actors and interventions to prevent and address abuse and corruption is a crucial prerequisite for equitable and inclusive community engagement. Peace and security interventions that fail to account for gendered roles, needs and power relations have a substantially higher risk of doing harm and of reinforcing norms, institutions and structures that enable gender-based injustice and violence.

Secondly, gender-responsive stakeholder engagement should be inclusive and participatory and prioritize the empowerment of the most marginalized and affected. All aspects of countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism interventions, including their design, should be co-led by stakeholders, partners and programme participants of diverse gender and intersecting identities, prioritizing the women's civil society organizations and marginalized groups most affected by a policy or programme. Such stakeholders are best equipped to define what success looks like and the means to measure it, as well as to identify the nature and terms of their engagement in countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism initiatives, including on whether a countering violent extremism framing is most appropriate in each circumstance.

Thirdly, inclusivity means more than casting a wide net. It means actively seeking to remove barriers to participation. Countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism efforts are only as inclusive as they are accessible. The participation and leadership of boys, men, girls, women and people of diverse gender identities can vary significantly, depending on when and where activities, meetings and consultations are held. For example, considerations related to participants' physical and mental safety, the risk of reprisals, access to transportation and the need for childcare and associated costs are crucial to ensure that individuals can participate in project activities.

Lastly, civil society experts should be compensated for their engagement. In many countries, women's labour and expertise are undervalued across the board, including in Government, civil society and academia. That disparity enables an environment in which women — far more frequently than men — are expected to speak and write without compensation in order to establish and maintain credibility in their

fields. When women, men and people of diverse gender identities are invited to participate in activities as expert speakers, authors, trainers or consultants, they should be fairly compensated.

In order to illustrate the importance of those guiding principles, allow me to highlight their application to two areas of counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism interventions that were mentioned in the Secretary-General's sixteenth report to demonstrate what gender-sensitive approaches look like in practice. I will focus on rehabilitation and reintegration and then turn my attention to countering the financing of terrorism.

First, policies and programmes that focus on the disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons associated with violent extremism or terrorism are more successful when they account for individual experiences and needs and are not confined to the victim/perpetrator binary. The gendered nature of power relations within societies and within terrorist groups is a critical dynamic that should be recognized. Most rehabilitation and reintegration interventions have been designed for male perpetrators. Building on the existing evidence base, it is important to design rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and policies that take into account gendered norms, structures and processes and their relevance to violent extremism and terrorism and to countering violent extremism and counter-terrorism efforts. Accountability and reconciliation efforts for returnees from Syria and Iraq should take into account the local attitudes towards individuals associated with violent extremist and terrorist groups and, where appropriate, engage with communities in order to help them to support returnees.

Assumptions and stereotypes about women's agency and their status as the victims of perpetrators further complicate the process of designing effective rehabilitation and reintegration policies and programmes. Other stereotypes include the demonization of women who are suspected of having committed crimes, which can be particularly challenging when they are in the process of reintegrating into a community. None of that is intended to detract from the prevalence of human trafficking and gender-based violence against women. In West Africa, some of our local partners facilitate dialogues, training and workshops using peacebuilding education and restorative justice methods to engage individuals who have been involved in terrorist groups. In the wake of the violent Boko Haram insurgency,

trauma consciousness and resilience support has risen to the forefront of those efforts. The organizations provide training for counsellors and civil society actors as first responders to victims of the insurgency.

During trauma and resilience workshops, trainers create a safe space that is conducive to the facilitation of open dialogues, addressing topics such as anger, conflict and power as they are experienced by individuals. That approach enables trainers to address the gendered nature of trauma and sexual and gender-based violence. Individuals can address their lived experiences, while accounting for intersectional identity factors such as gender, age and sexual orientation. In order to address safety concerns, particularly for women and girls, mobile listening and counselling clinics are used to allow for flexible, safe and private spaces in which women may process their trauma.

Secondly, efforts to counter the financing of terrorism have long been known to both intentionally and unintentionally constrict civic space, human rights and access to financial services. While the impacts are felt broadly across a diversity of actors, power and resource imbalances mean that the misapplication of measures for countering the financing of terrorism can have a disproportionate effect on marginalized communities. Women-led and women-focused organizations often have profiles that leave them vulnerable to experiencing the consequences of countering the financing of terrorism more intensely. For example, organizations that challenge the prevailing gender norms may see their work disrupted under the auspices of anti-monitoring laws and obligations that are related to countering the financing of terrorism. Smaller organizations and those with less financial resilience may struggle to meet the compliance standards related to countering the financing of terrorism and anti-monitoring laws, especially when measures are arduous and unduly restrictive. The gender and human rights implications of measures related to countering the financing of terrorism are receiving increased attention, but more needs to be done to ensure that the gender and human rights implications of measures for countering the financing of terrorism are properly understood and addressed from policy through practice. That includes ensuring that efforts related to anti-monitoring laws and countering the financing of terrorism do not hinder financial inclusion, which is particularly relevant for women, as it correlates with their financial

independence and economic empowerment, which can in turn increase their resilience to violent extremism.

I would like to conclude by noting that those are just a few examples of the importance of gender-responsive, rights-based approaches to countering violent extremism and terrorism. Prioritizing individuals and their experiences is essential for successfully countering violent extremism and for counter-terrorism efforts. While we continue to expand normative frameworks and resources in that regard, it is crucial to focus on their implementation and alignment with international law. In order to realize gains in sustainable peace and human rights, our efforts must be co-designed and implemented in partnership with local and national stakeholders from the respective countries or regions.

I once again thank Council members for the opportunity to brief them on the importance of gender-responsive efforts for countering violent extremism and for counter-terrorism and the need for such efforts to be undertaken with local civil society actors.

The President: I thank Ms. Praxl for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): Let me start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Acting Executive Director Chen Weixiong for the combined efforts of the various United Nations entities and international organizations that helped prepare the sixteenth report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/76) on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat, which contributed to today's briefing. I also want to thank Ms. Praxl for her informed and thoughtful remarks on gender mainstreaming in our counter-terrorism efforts.

My delegation took away three key highlights from the Secretary-General's report. First, the report highlights that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) continues to take advantage of conflict, corruption and inequality to attract followers and organize its terrorist attacks. Secondly, it also acknowledges that security responses alone are not sufficient. And thirdly, it makes clear that the international community must strengthen the capacity of vulnerable populations to counter misguided ideologies and reject violent extremism. The annual stabilization pledge drive of the Global

Coalition against Da'esh is in my delegation's view a particularly important pathway for the international community to fund stabilization programmes that can build resilient communities in the liberated areas of Iraq and Syria. Such efforts strengthen the capacity of those communities to reintegrate returnees, who will then work to help defeat ISIS.

We also thank the Secretary-General for the report's accurate account of the tragic aftermath of the so-called ISIS caliphate, which primarily includes the fact that tens of thousands of foreign nationals, most of them women and children, still reside in displaced persons camps. As we heard from our briefers today, those camps constitute a humanitarian, human rights and security crisis. The repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration, as appropriate, of foreign terrorist fighters and their associated family members is a top priority for the United States and is in our view the most durable solution to ensure that ISIS does not re-emerge in north-east Syria. We are pleased to have seen an increase in repatriations over the past six months, which we hope is a sign of greater efforts to come. The United States stands ready to help Member States bring their nationals home.

The United States remains particularly concerned about the increasing terrorism threat across Africa, which is outlined in the Secretary-General's assessment. We share his concern about the increased terrorist violence and confrontations between Government forces and non-State armed groups in the Sahel. The United States therefore continues to provide its African partners with critical counter-terrorism assistance designed to help them disrupt and degrade ISIS and Al-Qaida affiliates in a manner that is consistent with international law, underscoring that capable law enforcement and broader security-service responses are essential to preventing and countering terrorism.

We look forward to engaging in March with the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Africa Focus Group on ways to confront and defeat ISIS on the continent. We share the Secretary-General's assessment of ISIS-Khorasan. That group remains a significant terrorist threat in Central and South Asia. It continues to harbour ambitions and build capabilities to conduct external operations. It is critical that the international community deny safe haven for ISIS-Khorasan and Al-Qaida and its affiliates in Afghanistan.

Finally, we continue to press the Taliban to adhere to its counter-terrorism commitments. We are also gravely concerned about the Taliban's edicts restricting women and girls from working for non-governmental organizations and attending school. They are putting the lives of millions of innocent Afghans at risk as Afghanistan endures one of its coldest winters and grapples with emergency levels of food insecurity. The United States stands with the Afghan people in rejecting those edicts. We stand ready to help forge a united international response that reflects a collective commitment to the rights of Afghan women and girls and safe access to vital aid. I reiterate my thanks for the convening of today's meeting and for the briefers' remarks.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Voronkov, Mr. Chen and Ms. Praxl for their briefings. I would like to make two points.

First, the terrorist threat is not abating, which means we must be ever more vigilant. Da'esh remains a fundamental threat. In the Levant, our efforts remain essential, as evidenced by Da'esh's aim of recruiting young people and its attempts to release prisoners. The efforts of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, in addition to the efforts to combat impunity for the crimes it has committed, remain essential. The return of families to their communities of origin must be accompanied by robust solutions geared towards reintegration in order to prevent the threat from spreading. In Africa, the threat is spreading from the Sahel towards the Gulf of Guinea. The development of Da'esh-affiliated groups in Central, Eastern and Southern Africa is a growing concern. In that regard, we are determinately pursuing our efforts alongside our African partners within the Coalition for the Sahel and within the Global Coalition against Da'esh.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban takeover and the recent deadly attacks confirm our fears that Da'esh may become embedded in that country over the long term and that Al-Qaida may once again find a haven there. The terrorist threat there is more complex. Terrorists are exploiting community conflicts and socioeconomic difficulties to gain a foothold. They benefit from crime and trafficking, including acts that damage the environment.

Secondly, in continuing our efforts, we must adapt to this threat. I would like to mention three areas of action in that regard.

The first involves combating the financing of terrorism, which continues to evolve. The action that was initiated with the adoption of resolution 2462 (2019) must continue in order to ensure its full implementation and follow-up. We must take into account all sources of financing, including alternative and innovative financing.

The second area of action is about preventing the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes. We have made progress. France and New Zealand took action by launching the Christchurch Appeal. We welcome the increasing consideration of those issues in the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and hope that momentum can be maintained.

Thirdly and finally, we must take action to address the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism by implementing a global response. That response should not be confined to the military sector but should also take into account the civilian dimensions of the problem. It must respect human rights and international law. Actors such as the Wagner Group, which claims to be combating terrorism while committing massive human rights violations, are ineffective and counterproductive. We can see that clearly in the countries where they have a presence.

The United Nations has a central role to play in coordinating efforts to combat terrorism. France will continue to support all counter-terrorism actors at the United Nations.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Acting Executive Director Chen and Ms. Praxl, Director of Multilateral Relations at the Global Center on Cooperative Security, for their briefings.

The report of the Secretary-General (see S/2023/76) affirms the threat that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, known as Da'esh, together with its affiliate groups, poses to international peace and security. The group's geographic expansion of its operations, and the increasing attacks in Africa and Central Asia, are a reminder that terrorism is a global phenomenon to which no country is immune. Da'esh exploits conflict zones and socioeconomic issues such as unemployment, discrimination, inequality and the absence of the rule of law to exacerbate grievances and promote violent extremism. That explains its larger presence in States where those types of vulnerabilities are more pronounced.

The Secretary-General's report has once again highlighted the worrisome circumstances of foreign terrorist fighters and their families in detention camps. My delegation supports the efforts by various organizations to address the humanitarian and security needs of those populations, particularly their women and children. We must combat terrorism with a comprehensive strategy that in addition to the security agenda includes a preventive approach in dialogue processes; a development outlook focused on proposing solutions to the factors that serve as a breeding ground for radicalization that segment of society; and the establishment of mechanisms at all levels to ensure that those responsible for terrorist acts do not go unpunished.

As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, much of Da'esh's financing comes from its involvement in criminal activities linked to organized crime, such as extortion, kidnapping and the control of commercial routes for the purpose of trafficking weapons, narcotics and people. It is therefore essential to strengthen the mechanisms aimed at combating the financing of terrorism, such as the Financial Action Task Force, whose work we support.

The use of technological means to spread narratives of violent extremism and the use of unmanned aerial systems by terrorist groups are new challenges facing the international community. In that regard, the Delhi Declaration on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, adopted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee in October 2022, is an example of how the Security Council can respond to the changing nature of terrorism. We therefore support the work of the United Nations system in that area and recognize the efforts that are being made to improving coherence and coordination among the Organization's agencies and bodies that are tasked with combating this multidimensional phenomenon.

In conclusion, Ecuador fully and unequivocally condemns all acts of terrorism in all their forms and manifestations, regardless of their purpose or their perpetrators. Consequently, and in line with international law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law, Ecuador reiterates its commitment to the fight against this scourge.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Acting Executive Director Chen and

Ms. Praxl of the Global Centre on Cooperative Security for their briefings.

Terrorism fundamentally amounts to a denial and destruction of human rights, and the fight against terrorism will never succeed by perpetuating that denial and destruction. That remark made by the Secretary-General in 2017 still resonates today. It should guide us in all discussions and actions on the issue of terrorism, within the Council and beyond. People from many regions around the world suffer the effects of terrorist acts, which we firmly condemn in all their forms and manifestations. However, our response cannot be the indiscriminate use of force. Each terrorist threat has its own underlying causes and its own evolution of radicalization and violence. We should assess each context and always respect international law, in particular human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law, in all our efforts.

Switzerland is concerned about recent developments in Africa and Central Asia, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/76), particularly in conflict zones and neighbouring regions. Situations that were already complex are becoming increasingly murky as new extremist and violent groups emerge. However, the persistent threat of Da'esh is a global one and extends far beyond its own zone of activity. Like many other countries, Switzerland is very concerned about that. Last month, a man claiming to be acting in allegiance to Da'esh was sentenced to 20 years in prison after stabbing a victim selected at random. To address such challenges, we must step up our efforts and adopt a differentiated approach, one that takes into account age and gender, in order to prevent and combat radicalization and violent extremism in all their forms. The complete and balanced implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy must remain a priority if we are to address the root causes of terrorism and ensure that our commitment is founded on the rule of law. Civil society and human rights defenders, crucial partners in that task, must be able to operate in a safe and respectful environment.

Lastly, we noted that the report highlighted the growing use of new technologies by Da'esh. With the Delhi Declaration, the Counter-Terrorism Committee has a solid basis to further consider the issue. However, we cannot focus only the potential threats that new technologies pose, considering that they also provide major economic, social and cultural opportunities, which we can leverage to prevent and combat terrorism.

In that regard, it is important to continue an inclusive dialogue with the private sector, academia and civil society. Moreover, we must strive to make good use of new technologies in ways that accord with international law, in particular human rights law and international humanitarian law.

The Secretary-General concludes his report by stating that security responses alone are not sufficient. They must be accompanied by efforts aimed at preventing new recruits from joining the ranks of Da'esh and other terrorist groups. Switzerland supports that conclusion. The fight against terrorism and by extension against the threat posed by Da'esh will succeed only if we approach the situation as a whole by considering all the factors that lead to radicalization and violence. We can succeed only if we comply with the rule of law.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, and the delegation of Malta for convening today's meeting on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

We take note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/76) and thank Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and Acting Executive Director Weixiong Chen, as well as Ms. Franziska Praxl, Director of Multilateral Relations at the Global Centre on Cooperative Security, for their useful perspectives on the subject.

Regrettably, the Secretary-General's report confirms our fears about the increasing threat posed to international peace and security by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Da'esh and its affiliates, as we saw in the second half of the year, when it spread across conflict zones and to their neighbours, despite national and global attempts to bring it under control. Another grim reality that confronts us, as the report warns, is the convergence of global threats, in particular the intricate and intertwined connection between armed conflict, terrorist attacks and transnational organized crime. That reality must not be allowed to fester, as it aggravates an already dire situation for humankind.

We are therefore gravely concerned about the spread and incidence of terrorist attacks by Da'esh and its affiliates across the African continent, with their devastating consequences. We are particularly concerned about the fact that in West Africa and the Sahel, Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates and the Islamic State in the greater Sahara have intensified their violent

activities since their new leader, Abba Al Saharawi, was appointed in May 2022, and have continued to take advantage of intercommunal and social tensions to further their agenda. The situation in the Sahel in particular has deteriorated to a point where several countries are contending with terrorist groups that in some cases are fighting Government forces as well as one another for territorial supremacy and the control of resources. The troubling situation threatens peace, stability and security throughout the continent. As noted by Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Giovanie Biha of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in her recent briefing to the Council (see S/PV.9238), the activities carried out by armed organizations, violent extremists and criminal networks have resulted in the closure of more than 10,000 schools, which has had an impact on the lives of millions of children, as well as approximately 7,000 health centres. As she said,

“the central Sahel continues to face multidimensional challenges, unprecedented levels of security and humanitarian challenges and sociopolitical instability, further compounded by the impact of climate change and food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine” (S/PV.9238, p. 2).

In recent weeks, the brutality perpetrated by terrorist groups against innocent populations in Burkina Faso has compelled thousands to flee to neighbouring countries, including Ghana. The displacement of our neighbouring brothers and sisters reflects the fragile nature of the situation in the Sahel and the immense challenges that we collectively face in helping them to develop resilience through measures aimed at stabilization and recovery. We believe that we should not allow a few disgruntled elements in our societies to put the lives of the many in danger. Through enhanced international solidarity, we must demonstrate that we have the numbers and the resources to effectively confront that negative canker.

Acts of terrorism are a slap in the face of all of humankind. Not only do they constitute an attack on innocent lives, our economies and infrastructure, they also symbolize a complete assault on our common ideals and the dignity of every person. No country is exempt. Ghana believes strongly that preventing and countering terrorism requires enhanced global mobilization and a multidimensional approach. It is in that context that I wish to highlight the following four points.

First, Ghana stresses the importance of agreeing on a universal definition of the crime of terrorism. That definition should be grounded in the Charter of the United Nations and in international law and should be avoid creating any confusion. Within the current context of the global fight against terrorism, the absence of a suitable universal definition poses a challenge and subjects the question to different agendas, purposes and biases.

Secondly, in the light of the significant incidence of terrorism on the African continent, the situation requires both the coordination and the strengthening of the capacities of the countries of the region on the basis of the principle of ownership. We value our engagements with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and encourage their ongoing cooperation and support. However, many African countries still require technical support to build up their capabilities, especially in the realm of new and emerging technologies. As a result, we advocate for increased funding to improve the capacity of countries in our common battle against terrorism.

Thirdly, at the continental level, Ghana is making every effort to improve its coordination and cooperation with countries under the African Union’s counter-terrorism framework. Strengthening the ties between the United Nations and ongoing counter-insurgency operations conducted by regional organizations based on normative frameworks, such as the counter-terrorism policies of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, is an important priority for Ghana. At the regional level, Ghana has developed strong cooperation with its neighbouring countries in key areas related to the fight against terrorism. That has primarily been accomplished through the sharing of information and intelligence within the ambit of the Accra Initiative. As one of the leading nations against terrorism in West Africa, Ghana will continue to advance the initiative to make significant contributions to the stability and security of the region, including through securing our joint borders and staging joint exercises as part of our counter-terrorism policy.

Fourthly, Ghana places a strong focus on the importance of prevention as a primary objective that should be pursued in countering terrorism. Ghana strongly believes that increased investments in tackling the ideological, political, economic and social

underpinnings of terrorism are necessary in order to effectively prevent and combat terrorism. Equally vital is the development of a consistent political approach based on prevention. We encourage the adoption of a whole-of-society approach by involving private sector and civil society groups in resolving the underlying drivers and believe that can help reduce the vulnerability of youth groups to radicalization through the opening up of further opportunities for them. It is also important to adopt a gender-sensitive approach in countering terrorism, as one of our briefers today also underscored.

In conclusion, Ghana thanks the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Office of Counter-Terrorism for their support in the fight against terrorism. In that regard, we are grateful for the support we have received from allies in our region in our efforts to confront terrorists and violent extremists head-on. However, the Council has not stepped up to fully meet its responsibility in this area in the same manner that it has responded to the traditional threats to international peace and security. In that context, we warmly welcome the upcoming UNOCT counter-terrorism summit to be held in Abuja in October 2023, at which the question of support for counter-terrorism operations in Africa will be considered in depth. Ghana will continue to actively engage in efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism at all levels and will contribute constructively to advancing efforts to put an end to terrorism, including through the work of the Council and other relevant international organizations.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Mr. Chen and Ms. Praxl for their very helpful briefings. We are grateful to the United Nations for all its efforts in the fight against terrorism.

Last year, the Da'esh terror campaign was dealt a severe blow by the death of two of its leaders, but despite that, the threat from Da'esh and its affiliates continues to grow and evolve, as we heard today. A resurgent Da'esh core in Syria and Iraq remains a significant danger. We need to maintain our resolve, including through the Global Coalition against Da'esh. The United Kingdom remains firmly committed to supporting that. In 2022, for the first time in the history of Da'esh, the majority of its attacks were perpetrated outside its core focus area of Syria and Iraq. We have a collective responsibility, as States Members of the

United Nations, to use all the legal tools and levers at our disposal to counter that threat.

In Afghanistan, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province continues to show that it has the capacity to carry out high-profile attacks inside that country and to use it as a base to encourage attacks abroad. The Security Council must continue to demand of the Taliban that Afghanistan's territory does not provide a shelter for terrorist groups. We are also deeply concerned about the spread of the Da'esh threat through its affiliates across Africa. Instability, famine and climate-related crises are creating conditions that are being exploited by terrorist groups. We must rally together with the whole United Nations system behind a comprehensive approach that tackles the drivers of those conditions. The Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace is an opportunity to galvanize that work. We must also use United Nations sanctions regimes rigorously in order to prevent the proliferation of weapons to terrorist groups and choke off their access to financing.

There is one other important point to note in all of this: the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/76) is clear that the presence of non-State armed groups is a destabilizing factor. Groups such as the Wagner Group are not the answer. As the Secretary-General also notes in his report, we must ensure that all counter-terrorism efforts involve civil society and are gender-sensitive and anchored in human rights.

In closing, please allow me to underscore the United Kingdom's commitment to working together, including in the Council, to continue the global fight against all forms of terrorism and violent extremism.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I wish to congratulate Malta on taking the initiative to convene today's debate on the threat that terrorism continues to pose to international peace and security. I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Acting Executive Director Chen and Ms. Praxl for their enlightening briefings.

Between January and September of last year, more than 1,000 terrorist attacks were perpetrated in Africa, killing 7,816 people and injuring 1,772 more. According to data provided by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, each of the continent's five regions has had its share of casualties among civilians, security forces and officials. Of particular concern is Da'esh's ability to mobilize vast resources, making it

possible to acquire stockpiles of small arms and light weapons that fuel instability and violence on the African continent, especially in the Sahel; the Lake Chad basin, including the Great Lakes region; and Southern Africa.

The Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2023/76) notes the correlation between the structural security, social and economic difficulties experienced by some countries, particularly in Africa, and the dangerous rise of Da'esh's activities. In that regard, the many challenges posed by terrorist movements to international peace and security require continued vigilance and exemplary cooperation in order to strengthen the capacities of fragile States, in particular with regard to mastering the new information technologies that Da'esh is using with formidable expertise to expand its criminal activities. That is indeed a fundamental requirement, as terrorist groups continue to establish themselves in areas in which the authority and capacity of States are insufficient or lacking. The Security Council is the place in which to reaffirm the commitments we made in the Delhi Declaration and the need to implement its relevant recommendations.

Terrorist networks are constantly changing and are clearly resilient, despite the mobilization of the international community. Terrorist threats are intensifying and spreading to all regions. Governments are increasingly under pressure from populations fed up with the growing insecurity, especially since the political and economic measures adopted seem to fall short of the urgency and steadfast resolve required to fight the scourge. It is a war that puts the limited capacities of States to the test and destabilizes entire regions. That transnational threat is formidable, and no Government or organization can fight it alone. Concerted action at national, regional and global levels is crucial.

African leaders understand that. On 28 May 2022, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, meeting in Malabo, adopted an important declaration, in which they reaffirmed their commitment to fight against all forms and manifestations of terrorism and extremist violence on the continent. They also boosted numerous regional initiatives to fight terrorism, including the Group of Five for the Sahel and the Accra Initiative.

We must ensure that the current polarization of the world does not lead to a weakening of multilateralism, which dangerous terrorist groups and their affiliates

could take advantage of. Above all, we must stress the need for a holistic approach that fully considers the precarious socioeconomic conditions that make many disillusioned young people easy targets for radicalization and recruitment into terrorist organizations.

In the face of that scourge, we will need to agree on a number of cardinal principles, including zero tolerance of all forms and manifestations of terrorism and extremist violence; action on the basis of strict compliance with international law, respect for the rule of law and other relevant international instruments and protocols; and action protected from any form of politicization through irreproachable impartiality.

We must continue and strengthen our cooperation through information-sharing, the training of security and intelligence personnel and, where appropriate, support for operations aimed at weakening terrorist groups, particularly along common borders, where State capacity and authority are often limited.

On the African continent, the Accra Initiative, which is aimed at a coherent response that combines the military approach with long-term interventions to address governance deficits, can serve as a reference in that respect. We must tailor our response coherently, because fragmented responses fuel the interests of terrorist groups, which exploit systemic flaws to sow the seeds of violence. Those flaws include humanitarian crises, which are becoming increasingly complex, given the induced effects of climate change, and are correlated with the rise in poverty and inequality inherent in recurrent political and socioeconomic crises.

Our collective action against terrorism therefore requires a comprehensive approach and an appropriate treatment of the socioeconomic challenges faced by the affected countries: addressing the issue of youth education and training; strengthening State authority, particularly in fragile States; and improving living conditions, especially for disadvantaged populations.

Similarly, we must dry up the sources of funding for terrorist networks through consolidated partnerships by gathering intelligence on online money transactions and combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources, drug trafficking, human trafficking and kidnapping for ransom.

The United Nations must redouble its efforts, increase its means of action and boldly support peace-support initiatives and operations, particularly

African initiatives. The front against terrorism must be united, and everyone everywhere must be fully committed.

In Gabon's view, the international community's efforts must be supported by regional and subregional organizations, which are more familiar with the dynamics on the ground. However, they can be effective only if they have real capacity. It is therefore up to us to provide those organizations with the tools necessary to strengthen their resilience.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the crucial nature of the fight against terrorism as an absolute imperative for the peace, security and development of our States. The international community must be more determined to take urgent measures commensurate with the threat, within the framework of broader governance and involving all components of society, in order to deprive terrorists of the ideological propaganda they use for the radicalization and manipulation of vulnerable communities.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I would like to start by thanking the Under-Secretary-General of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, the Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Mr. Weixiong Chen, and the Director of Multilateral Relations of the Global Center on Cooperative Security, Ms. Franziska Praxl, for their comprehensive briefings. Mozambique expresses its full support for their work.

Terrorism is a global evil and a global responsibility. As such, the international community must help its countless victims. It is a phenomenon that can be seen as the result of the deficit of collective security. Combating terrorism is the collective responsibility of all peace-loving nations. Mozambique is therefore deeply concerned by the worrisome information provided in the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document S/2023/76. Despite efforts to curb the financial capabilities of Da'esh and its leadership losses, this group continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security.

The increase in the use of new technologies, including unmanned aerial systems and cryptocurrencies, and information and communications technologies such as the Internet and social media platforms by terrorist groups is a matter of huge concern, requiring concerted and robust counter-strategy responses.

Mozambique is a firm believer in multilateralism and international cooperation to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We therefore commend the Secretary-General in calling on the States Members of the United Nations and all member States of this organ, in particular, to continue prioritizing the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, under General Assembly resolution 75/291. In our view, that is a comprehensive tool at the disposal of our Organization for countering the threat posed by Da'esh, its affiliates and other similar terrorist groups.

The most vulnerable Member States need to be supported in countering that evil through a range of actions, including developing appropriate responses to address the precarious situation.

We are saddened by the grave abuses committed by Da'esh and its affiliates in areas in which they operate and the disproportional and devastating impacts on women and children, in particular. It is also shocking that children continue to suffer from the impacts of landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war, both in conflict zones and in post-conflict settings. Equally horrific is the fact these vulnerable groups continue to bear the consequences of atrocities such as abduction and sexual violence.

As the world steps up the fight against terrorism and all it represents, the African continent has been increasingly serving as a fertile ground for various terrorist groups. Terrorist organizations such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab have dramatically expanded their operations to the five regions of the continent and, in the process, are bringing a wave of unprecedented destruction, death and humanitarian crises.

The massive influx of terrorists and extremists from other parts of the world has resulted in escalating turmoil in the Sahel and North, Central and East Africa, as well as the Lake Chad basin and Southern Africa. We therefore could not conclude without reiterating the urgent need to revert the current endemic trend of the Africanization of terrorism, the result of which we are witnessing in all parts of the African continent under increasing terrorist threats, which must be stemmed by means of the concerted efforts of the international community.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Acting

Executive Director Chen for their valuable briefings. I also took note of the informative briefing by Ms. Praxl of the Global Center on Cooperative Security.

In January alone, 10 attacks by Da'esh in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria resulted in an estimated 50 people killed and even more wounded. That is a stark illustration of the simple fact, illuminated by many of the statements made here today, that the international community has been unable to find an effective framework for responding to the evolving nature of terrorism. To combat that threat, we urgently need an updated and refocused strategy in order to address the root causes of terrorism and prevent and counter the new phenomenon of terrorists using ever-increasingly sophisticated technology.

The international community must launch sustainable partnerships with local stakeholders. By working with grass-roots organizations, as well as religious and community leaders, we must tackle local grievances and prevent terrorists from exploiting such challenges for propaganda and recruitment in order for our strategy to be effective.

Terrorist propaganda networks are extremely resilient. Despite the demise of two Da'esh leaders this past year, the group's media arms remain worryingly active. In Afghanistan, Da'esh-Khorasan's nihilistic propaganda is being published in local and regional languages in order to reach the maximum number of possible recruits.

We must adapt and be agile in response to that evolving threat and ensure that alternative messages reach people before the propaganda does. Those messages must be tailored so as to address local concerns and promote the values of human fraternity, such as peaceful co-existence, interreligious dialogue, equality and tolerance. We should commit to a comprehensive architecture that addresses extremism as the antithesis of those values. On the occasion of the International Day of Human Fraternity last week, the Secretary-General underlined the danger of religious extremism undermining peace everywhere.

In parallel, affected populations must be offered a path to rehabilitation that leaves no place for terrorists. Access to education, economic inclusion and a secure and stable environment must be at the heart of that approach. Importantly, that applies equally to women, men, girls and boys. Ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making

roles in the development of such approaches is also integral to their success, as our civil society briefer outlined today.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the Secretary-General's recognition that the root causes of radicalization by Da'esh must be at the core of our collective measures against the terrorist group. We therefore encourage an increased focus in the Secretary-General's reporting on how terrorists exploit such conditions to consolidate and expand their control.

New and emerging technologies in the hands of terrorist groups pose an urgent threat to international peace and security. Governments and the private sector will have to collaborate closely to combat that misuse. Some analysts estimate that more than 20 non-State armed groups, including terrorists, have already acquired drones; others believe that as many as 60 such groups are in possession of drones today. That discrepancy shows the need for enhanced data collection and analysis, as well as close monitoring.

Da'esh and other terrorist groups continue to expand their drone arsenal for surveillance, reconnaissance and the filming of propaganda footage and for carrying out attacks. Terrorists are able to acquire drones and drone components, which are ever more readily available. That is also due to a lack of awareness of red flags by States' authorities and among legitimate online retailers, whose trade in such technology must be monitored.

I would like to stress that the terrorist proliferation of drones can be addressed without stifling innovation. The United Arab Emirates recommends strengthened international cooperation, based on transparent regulatory standards, among the relevant State institutions responsible for trade, customs, transportation, border control and other matters relevant to a country's specific context. The private sector plays a vital role in furthering the legitimate use of drone technology while employing appropriate due diligence measures.

Last year, the Counter-Terrorism Committee took a key step by adopting the Delhi Declaration, which provides non-binding guidance to stakeholders on how to counter the terrorist use of new and emerging technologies. As the current Chair of that Committee, the United Arab Emirates intends to build on that important achievement.

Despite its territorial defeat in Iraq and Syria four years ago, Da'esh remains a significant threat to all of us. If we want to succeed in our fight against the group, we must address the root causes of terrorism and effectively prevent terrorist access to advanced technology. That is why that has been the focus of my statement today. Business as usual is no longer an option. The United Arab Emirates intends to work diligently with all Council members to close such existing gaps in the counter-terrorism architecture.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank Malta for having convened this meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Acting Executive Director Chen and Ms. Franziska Praxl, Director of Multilateral Relations for the Global Center on Cooperative Security, for their briefings.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) remains a threat to international peace and security despite its continued losses in leadership. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/76), the activities of ISIL and its affiliates in the Middle East and Africa remain of deep concern. In particular, Japan is concerned about the activity of ISIL-Khorasan in Afghanistan. In addition, we agree with the view that it is of vital importance to take steps with regard to counter-terrorism in Africa.

As part of the global efforts on counter-terrorism, Japan places particular emphasis on the following three points: first, addressing the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism; secondly, building the capacity of law enforcement officials; and, thirdly, improving counter-terrorism capabilities, including for countering the threats of emerging technologies.

First, terrorism is a serious threat to the survival, livelihood and dignity of its victims, as it targets freedom from fear, which is one of the main pillars of human security. On top of that, however, terrorism will not be eliminated in a society in which the other two elements of human security, namely, freedom from want and the right to live in dignity, are not ensured. Addressing the root causes, such as poverty and inequality, is an essential element of counter-terrorism.

Secondly, capacity-building for law enforcement officials is critical to preventing and effectively combating terrorism. Japan has provided capacity-building assistance through United Nations agencies in areas such as border control, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration and maritime security.

Thirdly, the recent development of emerging technologies can enrich people's lives, but, at the same time, it poses a threat to international peace and security. Like other representatives, we commend the leadership of India for its timely adoption of the Delhi Declaration in the Counter-Terrorism Committee last year.

Terrorists and violent extremists have proved able to exploit the Internet to recruit and spread propaganda. Multi-stakeholder cooperation is necessary to effectively address that threat. In addition, it is important to take countermeasures against the financing of terrorism through emerging technologies, such as cryptoassets. Furthermore, the threat of terrorist attacks has increased, as the technology related to unmanned aircraft systems has improved.

We will continue to work with the international community to address the threat of terrorism posed by emerging technologies. Such efforts are integral to maintaining the foundation of the free and open international order, based on the rule of law. The rule of law is a key principle in effective counter-terrorism, and upholding it is essential not only for direct counter-terrorism operations but also for addressing the root causes of terrorism through social and economic development assistance.

Japan is determined to work continuously to promote and strengthen the rule of law in order to maintain international peace and security throughout its two-year term on the Security Council.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Acting Director Weixiong Chen for their briefings. We are truly grateful to the United Nations for the work that they do in that regard. I also thank Ms. Praxl, the civil society representative, for her very informative briefing. Furthermore, what we have taken away from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/76) is that terrorism remains a serious threat to international peace and security.

As many others noted, terrorism continues to spread across the African continent, especially the Sahel, where terrorist groups continue to proliferate and harm civilians. And we have seen that groups such as the Wagner Group are not the solution. As we heard, despite all actions undertaken against Da'esh, the group continues to recruit new members, including women. Da'esh continues to gather resources in order to fund its terrorist ideology and activities, as do other terrorist groupings, such as Al-Qaida, Al-Shabaab and the Islamic

State in Iraq and the Levant — Khorasan Province. They exploit modern technology and communication in order to spread death and destruction, and we should do more to prevent that. The persistent threat of terrorism requires us to reconsider our fight against it and to fight it at the source. That requires us to invest in education, health, sustainable development, the rule of law and just societies. Our best defence against terrorism is to create the necessary conditions for people to live in dignity, with their rights and freedoms protected. That is how we will become immune to the plague of terrorism.

In the meantime, we must fight the manifestations of terrorism with all our might, but we must do so without violating the values and norms that we cherish, while seeking to protect ourselves from terrorism. We must ensure accountability and design policies that are victim-centred and gender-sensitive. Our collective fight against terrorism must be a just fight, in full compliance with international law. We support the listing of more individuals under the sanctions regime of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities — a regime that provides us with powerful tools to cut the financial lifeline of terrorist groups.

We also urge all countries to repatriate their citizens from the camps in Syria and Iraq. Repatriation and reintegration should be part of our fight against terrorism. Albania has done its part, has repatriated Albanians from Syria and Iraq and has designed comprehensive reintegration programmes in order to give those people a second chance in life. We believe that is the right policy for everyone to follow.

In conclusion, Albania fully supports the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We need a global response to counter terrorism, with the United Nations having a central role in coordinating all efforts.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): We thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and the Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Mr. Weixiong Chen, for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Praxl for her contribution.

Brazil shares the Secretary-General's concern about the threat posed by Da'esh and its affiliates to international peace and security, in particular its regional spillover and the use of new and emerging

technologies for terrorist purposes. Poverty, inequality and social exclusion, especially in countries already affected by armed conflict or civil unrest, are some of the key drivers of recruitment and pledges of association in favour of Da'esh. The deep sense of injustice felt by marginalized populations certainly does not justify terrorism-related violence — or for that matter, any type of violence — but it does contribute to the appeal that radical ideologies can have for people who are disenchanted with their prevailing socioeconomic conditions. Moreover, expressions of xenophobia, discrimination and prejudice not only contribute to social exclusion but also fuel extremist narratives that are conducive to terrorism. Building more just and equal societies under the rule of law should be at the forefront of our efforts to contain the spread of the threat posed by Da'esh, in particular beyond its core area. Peacebuilding and financing for development must be an integral part of any comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy under the auspices of the United Nations, which must necessarily involve the competent United Nations bodies.

Another issue mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/76) relates to the relative weakness of the ties of association between Da'esh and certain groups or individuals pledging allegiance to that organization. We should reflect upon the standards currently applied by the Security Council to include entities or individuals in the sanctions regime established to deal with the threat posed by Da'esh. Brazil reiterates that decisions to add individuals to sanctions lists must always be evidence-based. We emphasize that listing requests should be submitted to the appropriate sanctions committee, accompanied by the evidence supporting the request, so that all committee members are in a position to judge the request on its own merits.

The Secretary-General's report contains several references to the possible connections between terrorism and transnational organized crime. As the Security Council has already recognized, the nature and scope of the possible linkages between terrorism and transnational organized crime vary considerably, depending on their geographic, social and political contexts. We reiterate that there is no automatic nexus between the two — they demand different remedies and must be addressed in their respective forums. A treaty-based definition of terrorism, with general acceptance, would be necessary to avoid any politicization of the

subject, as well as to quell the criticism that double standards are applied in international efforts to counter the terrorism threat. We hope that the upcoming eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy will provide an opportunity for the General Assembly, with its broader scope and membership, to advance those discussions.

Brazil is adamant about condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and we remain concerned about the continued threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security. As guiding principles of our foreign policy, our Constitution enshrines the repudiation of terrorism, the prevalence of human rights, peoples' right to self-determination, equality among States and the principle of non-interference. There is no real alternative to pursuing the objectives of ridding the world of terrorism other than by respecting international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law, strengthening international cooperation, and promoting economic development and social justice.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Mr. Voronkov and Mr. Weixiong Chen for their analysis of the activities of the United Nations entities in charge of the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). I also thank Ms. Praxl.

Issues related to combating terrorism must always be de-politicized. By its very nature it is a unifying topic. An evil such as international terrorism can only be defeated by working together. We must not allow the international legal counter-terrorism framework to crumble and the basic tasks of counter-terrorism and anti-extremism to be eroded. Nor should we impose views based on false theories and rules. Russia's policies are well known, and we are consistent in our implementation of them. Our key priorities include acknowledging the leading role of States and their relevant authorities in combating terrorism and extremism, permitting no justifications for any manifestations of terrorism and ensuring that terrorists and their accomplices cannot escape being called to legal account. It is important to maintain the central and coordinating role of the United Nations in international cooperation and to ensure compliance with the universal norms and principles of international law.

The Middle East and North Africa continue to be the epicentre of the spread of terrorism to other regions of

the world, particularly the rest of the African continent. We have all been discussing that danger for a long time. Each successive report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL notes the deteriorating situation and the increasing scale and reach of terrorist activities. African States continue to confront the problem of a lack of the resources needed to ensure security, in addition to difficulties in implementing binding provisions of counter-terrorism resolutions. Typically in Africa we have seen pseudo-Islamic ideologies and terrorist-exploited narratives conflated with religious, ethnic, social and political divisions. The terrorists are also benefiting from the effects of the colonial and neocolonial policies of the Western States, which have never shied away from fuelling and keeping afloat various long-standing conflicts for the sole purpose of continuing to plunder the continent's resource-rich territory for their own enrichment.

Centuries later, little has changed and, unfortunately, colonialism has yet to be eradicated. We are well aware of the real reasons behind Western countries' hysterical accusations of various actors who are working effectively to bring order and stability to countries on the African continent, at their request and in close cooperation with the local authorities. And incidentally, the looting of resources is not just happening in Africa. In the parts of Syria occupied by the United States and NATO, which have been seriously affected by terrorism, the West continues to plunder natural resources, particularly oil, as well as priceless objects of cultural heritage, all according to a centuries-old practiced pattern.

We are well aware of the difficulties that African States face in fulfilling their obligations, and the most vulnerable of them are those that have not been lucky enough to rid themselves of a Western military presence. The Permanent Representative of France mentioned the work of the Wagner Group. We can see that the French delegation is disappointed by the consistent refusal of States in the Sahel to cooperate with France and its military where the provision of security is concerned. But can anyone blame the countries of Africa for taking matters into their own hands and independently looking for and choosing those who they want to cooperate with and under what conditions? I am sorry to say this, but France's failures in the Sahel are the very reason that we are now witnessing the growing radicalism in the region that terrorist and extremist groups readily exploit. The States of the Sahel are aware of the futility — and even

the harm — of the French presence there and are turning for assistance to people who can truly restore order while also building equitable relationships. We will continue to provide such assistance on a bilateral basis.

We suggest that the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate focus on the States of the African continent and try to prioritize assessment visits, which would not only help to define problem issues but ensure that subsequent specific recommendations from country reports could serve as a basis for technical assistance programmes. If that approach is to be successful and productive it will require political will, a responsible attitude and close cooperation between the Committee and the African States themselves.

In the regional and global context, we are also seriously alarmed by the situation in Afghanistan, where international terrorist organizations, first and foremost ISIL-Khorasan, are expanding their capacities, and where there is a risk of a spillover of terrorist activity into neighbouring countries. The main reason for the current situation is the military intervention by the United States and its allies, which has had an extremely destabilizing effect on the entire region, not just Afghanistan. In the 20 years that the United States and its NATO allies spent in Afghanistan, the threat of terrorism has only increased. Yet the effects of that inglorious campaign, including the war crimes committed by the United States and NATO forces, as well as their private military companies, have been carefully glossed over.

We once again feel compelled to point to the problem of weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, to which the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/76) makes only passing reference. The main issue is that there is no indication of any sources. But there is no mystery about that. Weapons fall into the hands of terrorists either through criminal groups or directly from those who supply them in large quantities to maintain and foment conflicts. For example, the enormous stockpiles of weapons and equipment abandoned by the United States and NATO during their withdrawal from Afghanistan have long been used by terrorists in South Asia. They have even fallen into the hands of ISIL in Afghanistan. The huge quantities of weapons that Western countries are sending to the Kyiv regime are already being found in the hands of criminal groups in Europe itself and even among terrorists in Africa. And there is ample evidence of that.

The terrorist activity of ISIL and Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups remains a major challenge for international security. Terrorists are changing their tactics. They are making extensive use of information and communications technologies to finance their criminal activities, disseminate their ideologies and carry out attacks. That is a universal problem, and it requires the development of coordinated intergovernmental mechanisms to put a stop to it. In that regard, the so-called exclusive international partnerships that bypass established intergovernmental platforms — above all the United Nations — are unacceptable. In that connection, we welcome the efforts made by India last year in its capacity as Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, which helped to formulate the Delhi Declaration, on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes.

The Russian Federation will continue to build close cooperation on counter-terrorism issues with genuinely interested international partners, while taking into consideration their national experiences and requirements. We urge States not to allow effective intergovernmental mechanisms for cooperation on counter-terrorism and anti-extremism to be undermined and to focus on the real collective priorities in that area.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and Acting Executive Director Weixiong Chen for their briefings. We appreciate the work of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. We also listened attentively to the briefing by Ms. Praxl.

The briefings we just heard and the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/76) demonstrate comprehensively that the threat of terrorism remains very grave and there is still a long way to go before we can relax international counter-terrorism efforts. Since the beginning of 2023, two vicious terrorist attacks were already perpetrated in Kabul, while another reprehensible suicide attack was perpetrated at a mosque in Peshawar, Pakistan, on 30 January. Those attacks resulted in heavy casualties and raised yet another alarm. Da'esh terrorist forces are making a comeback in Afghanistan and the region.

We note with particular concern that the report of the Secretary-General states that the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party, a terrorist organization listed by the Security

Council, is cooperating with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan, including in jointly publishing propaganda posters, the exchange of personnel and joint military operations. We call on the international community to combat all forms of terrorism with a zero-tolerance approach and urge the Taliban to take resolute and strong measures to prevent the convergence of terrorist forces in Afghanistan in order to effectively protect the safety of the Afghan people and the foreign citizens resident in Afghanistan. We are equally concerned about the increasing geographical spread and frequency of violent terrorist activities across the African continent, including the marked deterioration of the situation in the Sahel, among other regions. We also note that Mozambique, Nigeria, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries have taken action to enhance counter-terrorism efforts, with remarkable results. The deployment of troops by the countries of the region to Mozambique has greatly weakened the strength of Da'esh-affiliated groups. The efforts of African countries to carry out joint counter-terrorism operations are commendable. The relevant international partners should increase their support, in particular with regard to financing, equipment, intelligence and logistical supplies, in order to help African countries improve their counter-terrorism capabilities.

As highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report, decades of counter-terrorism efforts have shown that security responses alone are not sufficient. At the same time, efforts should be made to prevent new recruits from joining the ranks of terrorist groups. In that regard, the United Nations Development Programme issued another and more revealing investigative report a few days ago, which found that in the Sahel subregion, the majority of those who join extremist groups are from the most remote and underdeveloped areas. One quarter of the respondents said that finding a job was the main factor motivating local people to join violent extremist groups — an increase of 92 per cent over comparable levels in 2017. Those facts and statistics are astounding. Although poverty cannot be deemed to be the only root cause of terrorism, poverty and associated economic deprivations are clearly important factors that breed terrorism. To eradicate the scourge of terrorism, the international community must make greater efforts to promote economic and social development. However, that is precisely the weakest link in a long-neglected section of the international counter-terrorism cooperation network. After adopting military

and security measures to curb the strength of terrorist groups, economic and development-related measures must be adopted as soon as possible. Otherwise, hard-won counter-terrorism gains may be lost. The international community should create a fair and favourable international economic, financial and trade environment for developing countries. International financial institutions should increase their inputs and support the countries concerned in allocating more resources to poverty eradication, universal education, food security, public health and other aspects of people's livelihoods. In that way, developing countries can embark on a path of sustainable and inclusive development that will enable everyone, especially young people, to benefit from development and thereby eliminate the breeding ground of insecurity and terrorism.

We are approaching the eighth biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We hope that the international community will take this opportunity to reaffirm its strong determination to jointly combat terrorism, share useful experiences, resolutely reject double standards and politicization, and remain committed to promoting the implementation of the four pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a comprehensive and balanced manner. More attention should be paid to capacity-building in developing countries and the elimination of the root causes of terrorism in order to inject confidence and impetus into global counter-terrorism cooperation and restore hope to the countries and peoples that have suffered so much from terrorist activities.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malta.

At the outset, I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Acting Executive Director Chen and Ms. Praxl for sharing their insights today.

Today's briefings highlight the undeniable reality that terrorism remains a grave threat to international peace and security. Malta is particularly concerned about the expansion of the terrorist threat across Africa, with the risk of spillover into new regions, particularly through Da'esh's dynamic affiliates. Al-Qaida also continues to expand its reach on the African continent through groups, including Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin in the Sahel and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Furthermore, Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates remain resilient in North Africa, despite counter-terrorism

pressures. The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan is also extremely worrisome, with Da'esh-Khorasan carrying out regular attacks. Such violence not only destabilizes the country even further but also challenges regional security. In addition, Da'esh maintains the ability to carry out high-profile attacks in Syria and Iraq. Da'esh's attack on the Al Hasakah prison almost one year ago serves as a stark reminder of that threat. The continued presence of foreign terrorist fighters in the region is also a major security threat.

I was pleased to attend the special meeting of the Counter-Terrorism Committee held in India last year and welcomed the adoption of the Delhi Declaration, which symbolizes the Security Council's shared determination to address that challenge. We also note the attention in the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/76) to the misuse by Da'esh of information and communications technologies. We echo the concerns of the Secretary-General that Da'esh's efforts to misuse the Internet and social media for propaganda purposes have become more sophisticated. In that regard, Malta underscores the importance of digital literacy skills in preventing and countering violent extremism online. Media literacy and critical thinking skills are necessary for participating in democratic systems, countering disinformation and, ultimately, tackling the root causes of radicalization. Terrorist groups are exploiting grievances, inequalities and governance deficits in order to radicalize and recruit. A comprehensive approach to addressing humanitarian, development and social needs is required in order to prevent recruitment among vulnerable populations, especially young people. We share the Secretary-General's view that security responses alone are not sufficient. Effective responses to preventing counter-terrorism require whole-of-society approaches, including meaningful engagement with civil society.

Malta also underscores the importance of protecting human rights and safeguarding the principles of

humanitarian action while countering terrorism. Too often, counter-terrorism measures are misused to silence human rights defenders and to deny populations vital humanitarian aid. As we have seen in many contexts over the past year, this legal risk is not hypothetical. Counter-terrorism measures must always comply with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

In addition, Malta supports a gender-responsive approach to counter-terrorism and welcomes the continued attention of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to this issue. All of us are aware that terrorist groups perpetrate callous acts of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage, violence which disproportionately affects women. We must therefore heed the voices of women and ensure their participation in decision-making on counter-terrorism.

Finally, as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Malta is concerned about the recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist groups. These practices are unacceptable, and we commend UNICEF for its support to affected children.

Before concluding, Malta welcomes today's announcement by Under-Secretary-General Voronkov regarding the upcoming review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We look forward to engaging with all Member States during the negotiations and to working constructively with both CTED and UNOCT during our Security Council tenure.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

There are no more speakers inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.