



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

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New York

Provisional

President: Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
Brazil	Mr. França Danese
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
Gabon	Mrs. Onanga
Ghana	Mr. Osei-Mensah
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Russian Federation	Ms. Zabolotskaya
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Seventeenth 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/2023/568)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Seventeenth 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/2023/568)

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; Ms. Natalia Gherman, Executive Director, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; and Ms. Farida Khalaf, survivor, activist and President of the Farida Global Organization

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/2023/568, which contains the seventeenth 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 present the seventeenth report (S/2023/568) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security, and the United Nations efforts in support of Member States to counter the threat.

I would like to start by expressing my sincere condolences to the Governments and the peoples of all Member States who have suffered from terrorism. Earlier this week, the Secretary-General helped mark the sixth International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism. The horrific impact of terrorism on the lives and livelihoods of so many people give impetus to our common efforts to counter and prevent it. The victims and survivors of

terrorism continue to serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of sustaining multilateral efforts against Da'esh and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

On 19 June, the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism, together with the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism, held a dedication ceremony to plant the Victims of Terrorism Solidarity Tree at Headquarters. The tree will stand as a timeless and powerful symbol of the commitment of the United Nations and the international community to protect and promote the rights of victims of terrorism.

I am pleased that the Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, Ms. Natalia Gherman, is joining me today to present this report, which our Offices prepared jointly with the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, led by Mr. Justin Hustwit.

As highlighted in this and previous reports, Da'esh and its affiliates continue to constitute a serious threat in conflict zones and neighbouring countries. However, the threat level remains low in non-conflict areas. That analytical distinction can obscure what is the complex, context-specific and dynamic nature of how those groups operate and evolve and their impact on international peace and security.

In parts of Africa, the continued expansion of Da'esh and affiliated groups, as well as the increasing level of violence and threat, remains deeply concerning. The Da'esh affiliate in the Sahel is becoming more and more autonomous and increasing attacks in Mali, as well as Burkina Faso and the Niger. The confrontations between that group and an Al-Qaida affiliate in the region, coupled with the uncertain situation after the coup d'état in the Niger, present a complex and multi-faceted challenge. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, attacks by terrorist and other armed groups have also increased, with continued clashes between Government forces and terrorist groups. In the eastern region of the country, some 500 persons have perished due to terrorist violence. Conflict and instability in the Sudan have also renewed attention on the presence and activity of Da'esh and other terrorist groups in that country.

Beyond Africa, the situation in Afghanistan is growing increasingly complex, with fears of weapons and ammunition falling into the hands of terrorists now materializing. The in-country operational capabilities of Da'esh's so-called Khorasan province, sanctioned

as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, has reportedly increased, with the group becoming more sophisticated in its attacks against the Taliban and international targets. Moreover, the presence and activity of some 20 different terrorist groups in the country, combined with the repressive measures put in place by the Taliban de facto authorities, the absence of sustainable development and a dire humanitarian situation, poses significant challenges for the region and beyond.

This complex picture remains despite successful counter-terrorism initiatives by Member States. There has been progress in targeting Da'esh finances and leadership cadres, including the death of the Da'esh leader earlier this year, confirmed by Da'esh itself after the report's completion. Those measures had a notable effect on the group's operations in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as elsewhere. Counter-terrorism initiatives in Egypt, Mozambique and Yemen have also significantly limited the ability to conduct operations. Yet the risk of resurgence remains.

As a result of counter-terrorism efforts, Da'esh has moved to adopt less hierarchical and more networked, decentralized structures, following in Al-Qaida's footsteps, with increased operational autonomy by its affiliated groups. While there is little evidence that the core leadership is exercising command and control over regional affiliates, financial, propaganda and other connections remain. Perhaps most notably, the typical surge in Da'esh violence during the month of Ramadan did not materialize in 2023.

The situation in the camps and detention facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic that hold individuals with alleged links to Da'esh and other terrorist groups has been dire for many years and is unlikely to improve soon. Although the increased pace of repatriations, mainly by Iraq, is welcome, tens of thousands of people — most of whom are women and children — are still stranded in camps and detention facilities, with unpredictable consequences for regional and international security.

I offer four key observations for the Council's consideration.

First, compliance with international law, including international human rights law and humanitarian law, remains the essential bedrock for the success of counter-terrorism efforts. Actions that contravene

those legal obligations only undermine global efforts against terrorism. Effective counter-terrorism requires inclusive approaches and gender-responsive measures.

Secondly, the persistent challenges posed by terrorism underline the need for counter-terrorism initiatives to be firmly grounded in political strategies for resolving the conflicts that fuel terrorism the most. Force alone cannot lead to changes in the conditions conducive to terrorism. Indeed, the use of force, without any clear strategy backing it and with no anchor in international law, can be counter-productive, fuelling more violence, aggravating grievances exploited by terrorists and creating conditions conducive to the proliferation of terrorist groups. In that regard, the Secretary-General, in his policy brief on the New Agenda for Peace, has called for a new generation of counter-terrorism operations led by African partners with a Security Council mandate under Chapters VII and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, with guaranteed funding through assessed contributions. Those operations should align with the full range of United Nations tools and mechanisms for responding to crises.

Thirdly, with regard to prevention, the nature of the threat posed by Da'esh underscores the need for more complementarity between security responses and preventive measures. Further efforts are required to prioritize and significantly increase investment in prevention efforts. The integrated and balanced implementation of the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy would help to ensure that very point.

Finally, developments in some parts of Africa are deeply concerning and interconnected with existing conflicts and local grievances. The African counter-terrorism summit being organized by the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Government of Nigeria, to be held in Abuja next year, will offer an opportunity to redouble international support and explore transcontinental approaches to address the situation.

The General Assembly's adoption of resolution 77/298 on its eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy sustained the long-standing multilateral consensus on counter-terrorism. The adoption of the resolution should serve as a reminder that consensus does not come easy. However, once achieved, it reaffirms the unity of Member States against terrorism.

Countering and preventing terrorism require long-term commitment, as well as continued and coordinated efforts. I welcome the support expressed by all stakeholders at the 2023 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week in New York for multilateral efforts to counter terrorism. I look forward to closely collaborating with partners on the key priorities identified during the United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States. The United Nations, including the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, will continue to support Member States in their endeavour to address the scourge of terrorism.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Gherman.

Ms. Gherman: My sincere thanks go to the members of the Council for the opportunity to brief them on the seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh (S/2023/568). I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov for his overview and to commend both the Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team for their close collaboration in formulating the report.

As the report makes clear, Da'esh remains agile and ambitious, despite its diminished territorial control. In my briefing, I will highlight four key trends from the reporting period.

First, terrorist activity has continued to occur predominantly in the context of existing conflict. A fragmented geopolitical landscape, including the presence of terrorist groups operating across multiple regions, the emergence of new conflict areas and growing complexities in armed conflict situations have created additional challenges for Member States and made the resolution of conflicts more difficult. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace, that trend requires a comprehensive approach that integrates a wilful pursuit of peace while also addressing the root causes of violence and conditions that may be conducive to radicalization to terrorism, rather than continuing solely with over-securitized responses in countering terrorism.

Secondly, the report welcomes the continued efforts of Member States to repatriate their citizens from the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, including some for the first time, which is a commendable development.

We must acknowledge the complex challenges that Member States face in addressing the dire situation in the camps in north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, especially with regard to women and children associated with Da'esh foreign terrorist fighters.

At the same time, we must recall the responsibility of Member States to bring terrorists to justice and to demonstrate international cooperation in efforts to do so. That also requires whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches to the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters. The United Nations continues to assist those Member States facing challenges related to the return of their nationals, including through the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq Third Country National Returnees. Through that framework, the United Nations is providing support on legal protection for children, security and accountability for adults, rehabilitation and transitional services, and reintegration.

Thirdly, the Da'esh operational presence in parts of Africa continues to evolve. It is therefore essential that the United Nations provide tailored and comprehensive support to African Member States to boost their capacity in addressing underlying conditions conducive to terrorism and strengthening criminal justice responses to terrorism, border management responses and efforts to counter the financing of terrorism.

During the reporting period, United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities strengthened their partnerships with some African countries to respond to evolving threats, particularly in and around East and West Africa, especially in the Sahel. Entities' efforts were focused on countering the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, responding to the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, preventing terrorists' travel, protecting vulnerable targets and mainstreaming gender and human-rights-based responses to terrorism. This year the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), acting on behalf of the Committee, completed its first comprehensive assessment visits to Benin in March and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in July. The visits focused on issues such as the threat of terrorism, countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism, criminal justice responses, countering terrorism financing, law-enforcement measures and border management, international cooperation and human rights and gender dimensions.

Fourthly, the United Nations has stepped up its efforts to hold Da'esh accountable for its crimes. In that regard, CTED continued to assess criminal justice frameworks with a view to enhancing accountability for terrorist acts in accordance with relevant Council resolutions and international standards. CTED partnered with the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to explore criminal justice avenues for sexual and gender-based violence when committed by a designated terrorist group or with terrorist intent. Drawing on practitioners' experiences in the field and the perspectives of civil society, it is clear that only through accountability and justice can we begin to address the fear and devastation that terrorism inflicts on individuals, communities and nations.

If we are to successfully counter the complex threat of Da'esh and other terrorist groups, we need to learn from past experience while identifying and addressing new and emerging threats. In that regard, the Counter-Terrorism Committee and CTED continue to work with our partners to explore how new technological tools and applications, such as generative artificial intelligence, machine-learning systems and other emerging cyber-based platforms can be used to identify threats and enhance States' counter-terrorism capabilities. Following the adoption of the Delhi Declaration, CTED has been consulting United Nations partners, think tanks, civil society, academia and the private sector to develop a set of non-binding guiding principles for Member States. The principles will assist Member States in preventing, detecting and disrupting the use of emerging financial technologies, information and communications technologies and unmanned aircraft systems for terrorist purposes.

To further support Member States' efforts to counter the financing of terrorism, CTED also released two thematic summary assessments of gaps and areas requiring further action to implement the Security Council's resolutions related to terrorist financing. Those assessments are aimed at informing the design of targeted technical assistance and capacity-building programmes by UNOCT and other implementing agencies and are accessible on CTED's website.

I would like to emphasize that it is critical for our counter-terrorism measures to be part of a comprehensive approach to addressing the threat of terrorism. Our efforts must be evidence-based, tailored, age- and gender-responsive and compliant with human rights

principles, and they must devote sufficient resources to prevention. In addition, we will continue to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, including academia and research partners, community and religious leaders, civil-society organizations, representatives of women and young people and the private sector.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate CTED's commitment to the successful implementation of its mandate under the policy guidance of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and in support of Member States' efforts to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Khalaf.

Ms. Khalaf (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Security Council on behalf of Yazidi women, who have suffered violence and oppression by Da'esh, and of women of other marginalized communities around the world. I also thank the United States delegation to the Security Council for inviting me to deliver this message today.

At the outset, before entering into the details of my message, I would like to briefly introduce myself. My name is Farida Khalaf, President of Farida Global Organization. I am a Yazidi survivor of Da'esh prisons from the village of Kojo. Like many other Yazidi women, I was abducted by elements of Da'esh in August 2014. I suffered all forms of violence — physical, emotional and mental. In my 20s, I was a girl who dreamed of finishing school, forming a family and living a simple life in my village in Shingal. However, fate saw otherwise. My dreams were ended at the hands and in the prisons of Da'esh. Instead of studying, I became a slave. Instead of forming a family, I was sold and bought by elements of Da'esh like thousands of other Yazidi women who have suffered the worst crimes during and after our abductions from Sinjar by Da'esh.

I do not need to tell Council members more stories about the suffering of Yazidi women. Before me, Ms. Nadia Murad addressed our plight in the Council (see S/PV.9016), and many Yazidi women have spoken out about the sexual and ethnic-based violence and other forms of physical suffering that were perpetrated by Da'esh and other terrorist groups against thousands of Yazidi women. Many of those women, not having been liberated until now, continue to face this suffering.

It is likely that Council members have heard about what happened to my people on 3 August 2014, when Da'esh forces raided the Yazidi areas of Sinjar. I know that most countries have been informed about those days and the crimes that were committed. Nevertheless, at present, the genocide continues, and we are currently living in the tenth year of genocide.

I will refresh Council members' memories with evidence that proves that further efforts were not made to end the genocide and bring forth justice. We must start by fully recognizing the genocide and developing an environment safe for the return of Yazidis to their homes.

It is in the name of humanity, peace and justice that I address the Security Council today. Mine is a message of humanity and a plea for addressing the suffering of women in vulnerable and minority communities who have met violence time and again without mechanisms of protection. Violence against women in the Middle East, including in Iraq, is not a new phenomenon, nor did it emerge with Da'esh. It existed at the time of Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, who abused women as easy prey.

I come before the Security Council today strongly and bravely, not representing myself alone but supported by my family and the Yazidi community as well as the local and international communities, without whose support for Yazidi women, I would not be speaking in the Council today. Many States around the world, without naming names, have offered a lot to our community through their recognition of the genocide and by sending humanitarian assistance to the camps. However, the current reality requires significant efforts and assistance to achieve justice and to hold Da'esh accountable in international tribunals. There is still much to be done to ensure the safe and dignified return of displaced persons, including searching for the abductees who remain in captivity.

The suffering will continue as long as armed conflict, wars, displacement and forced migration continue. The violence can be brought to an end only by ensuring justice and the rule of law. Our community continues to live in genocide, which is in its tenth year. Approximately 2,700 persons remain missing with unknown fate, including women and children. If Da'esh is no longer active on the ground, where are those persons now? With whom are they living and in which State? The areas and countries are known, but real efforts to locate and free those persons are missing.

Very sadly, 70 per cent of Yazidis remain displaced in camps that lack the basic requirements needed to live in dignity. After 10 years, most tents have still not been changed. Council members may wonder why they remain in camps. The reason is because their home areas are not ready yet for their return. Their areas are still witnessing military, political and security conflicts. No efforts are being made to provide fair reparations. Challenges continue without formal interventions by the State. No real efforts — locally or internationally — are being made to resolve the displacement issue and to provide mechanisms that allow displaced persons to return to their homes in dignity and safety.

The prolonged displacement leads to problems and challenges psychologically and educationally, in particular for women. They reach a point of despair and lose hope for the present and the future. That is the situation for many communities around the world, including the Yazidis, who are experiencing their tenth year of displacement.

All those issues are indicators of the increased number of migrants. They have a legitimate right to seek a safe haven where their religious and racial identities are respected and protected. In my view, they should also have the right to seek asylum in States of their choosing because they have survived genocide and continued violations and have fled religious persecution.

Da'esh and Al-Qaida have committed all forms of sexual violence against women. That cannot be denied. It became publicly known when the world learned of the crimes Da'esh committed against Yazidi women. More efforts are needed to put an end to sexual violence and to hold accountable those responsible for the crimes against women.

The Security Council played a great and historic role in establishing the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant through resolution 2379 (2017), which recognized that what the Yazidis have suffered at the hands of Da'esh amounts to genocide. That, in itself, is an achievement on the path to ensuring justice for the Yazidi victims.

We thank the Security Council for such resolutions. Those efforts and the efforts of the German Federal Court of Justice to hold the perpetrators accountable are highly appreciated, but we know they are not enough. We need further international efforts to hold more criminals accountable and to establish tribunals to

investigate and to prosecute the crimes against women. I would like to inform the Council that I and many other Yazidi women are prepared to travel to tribunals to deliver our testimonies. That is possible and reasonable with the Council's support.

I would also like to note that the Iraqi Parliament is currently discussing the granting of general amnesty for prisoners and thousands of Da'esh elements and their affiliates. That is an affront to the suffering of Yazidi women and victims of the Yazidi genocide. We call on the Security Council to work with the Iraqi Government to ensure that the Da'esh elements are not included in that decision.

I would like to call for more international support for female survivors and victims' families. Reparations are not only financial. Achieving justice is also very important and so is the initiative by some Council members and many States to form the Global Coalition against Da'esh in order to combat Da'esh militarily. I hope that the Council will take steps to allocate funds to an international construction fund that will support the rebuilding of Sinjar so that the displaced persons, in particular women, can return to their homes in safety and dignity.

Ten years have passed, and people are still living in camps of displaced persons in the heat of the summer and in the cold of the winter. I hope the 15 States members of the Security Council will send representatives to spend just 10 hours in those camps and experience the cruelty that the displaced Yazidis have been experiencing for 10 full years. The Da'esh elements who committed the genocide were not only Iraqis; they were from multiple countries. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the international community to restore the rights and dignity of the genocide victims.

I am grateful that the Council is listening with sympathy to our stories — mine and those of Nadia Murad and others. However, that will not deliver justice. It will not repair the damage if there is no action on the ground. I hope that next year those stories and statistics will not need to be repeated. The fact that those stories and statistics have been presented for 10 years shows that the situation is still the same and that not much has changed on the ground.

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

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Gherman for their work on the seventeenth report (S/2023/568) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security, and for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Khalaf in advance, since I will have spoken before she courageously shares her personal story, which I look forward to hearing. Her leadership as a survivor and an advocate is very inspiring to all of us. Her story will illustrate the gruesome tactics that terrorist groups such as Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and Al-Qaida use to terrorize civilians, and we must hold all those responsible for those evils to account.

The United States is committed to promoting justice and accountability for all acts of conflict-related sexual violence, and that commitment is laid out in President Biden's memorandum on promoting accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. In June the United States named two Da'esh leaders as specially designated global terrorists. Both individuals committed sexual violence against Yazidis and were responsible for the abduction and enslavement of Yazidi women and girls. The designation of those two individuals was a historic act, marking the first time that a dedicated focus on conflict-related sexual violence has led to the imposition of United States sanctions. We will never stop fighting for justice or forget the more than 2,700 Yazidi women and children who remain unaccounted for.

We must use all multilateral tools available to us, including United Nations sanctions, to prevent such acts of conflict-related sexual violence, given how destructive such violence is for victims and communities and how destabilizing for societies. We urge Member States to increase their funding for United Nations agencies and partners working to provide comprehensive services for survivors of gender-based violence. Those programmes can have a significant impact on survivors' lives, and they must be funded, especially because right now the world's most vulnerable women and girls are in dire need. To give just one example, many of the people residing in the Al-Hol and Roj displaced persons camps in north-eastern Syria, some of whom are family members of ISIS fighters, are also victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The situation in those camps constitutes a humanitarian, human rights and security crisis, and there is an urgent need for countries to repatriate their nationals from them. The United States

views the repatriation of both detained ISIS fighters and displaced persons in the Al-Hol and Roj camps as a top priority. It will help to ensure ISIS does not re-emerge in Syria, and it can prevent further human rights abuses. We have seen an increase in repatriations over the past six months and hope that it is a sign of greater efforts to come. The international community must also ensure vulnerable populations are not susceptible to recruitment by violent extremists, including through stabilization assistance to liberated areas.

As the Secretary-General's report highlights, ISIS continues to take advantage of conflict and inequality to attract followers and organize terrorist attacks. The United States is particularly focused on the increasing terrorism threat across Africa, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report, and we are deeply concerned that the string of military takeovers in the Sahel will hamper the fight against terrorism in the region.

We look forward to the African counter-terrorism summit in early 2024 and the opportunity to discuss durable solutions to the terrorism challenges across the continent. But let us be clear, the summit must include engagement with civil society organizations in order to be impactful.

The United States continues to provide its African partners with critical assistance in disrupting and degrading Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates in a manner consistent with international law. I want to reiterate that capable law enforcement and broader security service responses are essential to preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

In South Asia, Afghanistan must deny safe haven to terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida and ISIS-Khorasan, which continue to harbour ambitions to carry out attacks and have claimed deadly attacks in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Today I also want to call on member States to support increased transparency in, and operationalization of, the Counter-Terrorism Committee's assessment. Those neutral expert reports include recommendations to guide the provision of counter-terrorism-related technical assistance, and the Secretary-General's report rightly characterizes the fight against terrorism as requiring a long-term commitment.

The international community and the Council must continue to invest in whole-of-society approaches that respect human rights and the rule of law. By doing so,

we can prevent and counter the spread of terrorism. And we can save lives and end needless suffering. We must act with urgency, and we must act together now.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Ms. Zabolotskaya (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Voronkov and Ms. Gherman for their analysis of the activities of the United Nations entities entrusted to them for combating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We express our full support to the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. We agree with several assessments contained in the Secretary-General's report on the threat posed by ISIL (S/2023/568).

When analysing the terrorist threat, it is important to focus not on symptoms but on its root causes. In that context, the Council often mentions issues related to development, socioeconomic underdevelopment, weak State administration institutions and complex security or humanitarian situations. However, we must not forget that those problems are often the result of the collective West's interference in the affairs of sovereign developing States and the implementation of managed chaos strategies through the organization of colour revolutions involving extremists and terrorists of all stripes.

The former colonial empires have not changed their colonizing habits. Today, under the pretext of so-called counter-terrorism operations, they maintain their military presence, of which affected countries have long tired. The blatant ineffectiveness, if not failure, of those so-called counter-terrorism operations in curbing the terrorist threat is noteworthy. That fact clearly shows that the real objectives of foreign military presence are completely different. Under the guise of counter-terrorism, the appropriation of other nations' natural resources is in full swing. To realize its geopolitical ambitions, add fuel to smouldering conflicts and create the appearance of supposedly popular resistance to "undemocratic regimes", the West uses every means possible, not shying away from providing support to terrorists. That explains attempts to divide terrorists into "good", "bad" and "not so bad".

The Secretary-General's report on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security, which is under consideration today, perfectly illustrates the arguments

we have outlined. It highlights the Middle East, parts of Africa and Afghanistan as the most problematic regions in which ISIL and its affiliates continue to grow stronger. What do they have in common? The answer is quite obvious — the destructive role of the West.

Let us start with the Middle East, where ISIS emerged as a direct result of the aggression of the United States and its coalition against Iraq. Even now, when ISIL has been largely defeated in Iraq and Syria, pockets of terrorism remain in areas illegally occupied by the United States military.

The threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters and their families, who remain and are radicalized in prisons, camps and detention facilities in north-eastern Syria, also emanates from those areas. The United States provides guidance and advice to other States on addressing that threat. But, first, it must itself withdraw its occupying troops from Syria. National authorities will then be able to address that and other issues much more quickly and effectively.

Let us turn now to the situation in Africa. There is no doubt that ISIL emerged in Africa as a result of the NATO aggression against Libya, which led to the collapse of the statehood of that once prosperous country. We remember very well that France and the United States were at the forefront of that illegal military invasion. To divert attention from their own destructive role, those countries and their allies attempt to reduce everything to the poor economic and social conditions of States, weak governance institutions and even climate change. However, those problems are not new and have not previously led to the radicalization of populations nor encouraged terrorists to establish strongholds in the region.

The situation changed after the collective West attacked and destroyed Libya, seeking to overthrow a Government that they saw as undesirable, pillage the country's resources and natural wealth and spread a blazing fire of controlled chaos to the Middle East and Africa. Today the highest threat level is being experienced in the Sahel region, and the West talks endlessly about helping to combat it. However, against that backdrop, information has emerged that France is cooperating with terrorist organizations in the region, in particular, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin.

Turning back to socioeconomic problems, which, we must not forget, are a consequence of the colonialist and neocolonialist policies carried out towards African

States, Africa has all the resources it needs to develop harmoniously. It is important that those resources stay on the continent and not go to equip other people's Gardens of Eden in the West. The struggle against colonialism and neocolonialism must be completely carried out. Our African partners know that our country supports and has always supported them in that endeavour.

We also cannot fail to mention Afghanistan. The situation in that country is also a vivid example of the West's leveraging of counter-terrorism issues to serve their selfish geopolitical interests. Foreign troops led by the United States were in that country for more than 20 years under the pretext of fighting terrorists; back then it was Al-Qaida. All of a sudden, the United States decided to flee the country, leaving behind an enormous number of weapons and military equipment. Al-Qaida was never successfully defeated, and now the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has also appeared in Afghanistan. Consequently, the Western weapons brought into the country to fight terrorism ended up, among other places, in the hands of the terrorists themselves, who threaten peace and security in Central and South Asia. Once again, we see a familiar scenario supporting the spread of controlled chaos.

The West's use of terrorists and extremists for their geopolitical purposes can also be seen in Ukraine. The United States and its European satellites have nurtured and fostered neo-Nazis, whom they then used as a battering ram to overthrow the legitimate Government in the bloody coup of 2014. Under the West's guidance, the neo-Nazis were given the opportunity to become deeply entrenched in the Government, law-enforcement and military bodies of the country. For many years, they terrorized the civilian population of Donbas, under the cover of silence created by Western media and, sad as it may be, by United Nations entities as well. Today the Government in Ukraine, which exists solely thanks to Western handouts, does not shy away from using terrorist methods; indeed, it openly flaunts such tactics.

It is in this difficult context that we must engage in international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. While some are fighting this scourge, others are fuelling it in new forms and in new territories. The Russian Federation will continue building its cooperation on counter-terrorism issues with all parties prepared to engage in constructive and practical interactions aimed at achieving the common goal of eradicating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, without hidden

agendas or double standards. We call for a pooling of efforts to improve the efficiency and coordination of international cooperation in the fight against terrorism based on the norms of international law, including the United Nations Charter, in particular its provisions relating to the sovereign equality of States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

Mr. Osei-Mensah (Ghana): Let me begin by acknowledging the seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (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/2023/568) and thanking the Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and Executive Director Natalia Gherman for their useful briefings. We also appreciate the additional perspective of Ms. Farida Khalaf, survivor and civil society organization briefer.

The continuing threat posed by terrorist groups, such as (ISIL/Da'esh), to international peace and security is one that should continue to engage the attention of the Security Council. As the Secretary-General's updated report indicates, there is a strong relationship between the level of threat and the incidence of conflict. The link also reveals the weakness in the capacity of States in conflict situations to effectively counter the threat of terrorism on their own and underscores the importance of international and regional support for such endeavours.

It is important to also reflect on the notable successes achieved in our collective efforts to counter terrorism. The report underscores the remarkable progress made through collaborative counter-terrorism initiatives, highlighting in particular the recent accomplishments in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where regional forces and joint military operations have disrupted Da'esh and its activities. In Europe, the unwavering commitment of law-enforcement agencies, intelligence services and security forces has succeeded in averting terrorist attacks conducted by individuals. By dint of their efforts, potential threats have been successfully identified and neutralized, leading to the prevention of numerous planned attacks.

However, while acknowledging those and other advances made in our collective counter-terrorism efforts, it will be crucial to remain vigilant and address the critical issue of arms transfers and their potential contribution to the proliferation of terrorism. In addition to fuelling conflicts, irresponsible arms transfers provide

terrorist organizations such as Da'esh with the means to carry out their destructive activities. To combat that, we must prioritize responsible arms control and strengthen border-control measures to prevent Da'esh from expanding further. By securing our borders, we can significantly slow down the proliferation of weapons and undermine terrorist groups' ability to operate. We must address the availability of weapons for Da'esh in conflict zones in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa, as well as its ability to manufacture smaller improvised explosive devices and its ambitions for advancing its weapon capabilities.

In response to the role that financing plays in facilitating terrorist networks such as ISIL, which continues to extort and kidnap for ransom in order to raise finances for its nefarious activities, we encourage the further development and refinement of digital tools that can track and flag the movement of funds outside banking systems intended for terrorism financing, however small the amounts transferred may be. We must better coordinate our efforts to destroy the financial infrastructure of terrorist groups. Moreover, we cannot ignore the disturbing expansion of Da'esh activities in the Sahel and West Africa, which the report highlights. That calls for intensified cooperation, particularly in the areas of intelligence-sharing and logistical support. A robust initiative aimed at countering that expansion demands a unified response whereby information and resources are effectively shared to dismantle Da'esh's networks and curtail any further expansion. In that regard, we call for collaboration and support for the Accra Initiative, which is evolving as the Economic Community of West African States' counter-terrorism platform. By pooling our resources and intelligence, and with mutual support, we can create a robust defence against violent extremism and counter-terrorism in the region.

We highlight the situation of Da'esh fighters and their family members in detention facilities in north-east Syria and call for urgent and appropriate action to address the matter, given the alarming reports of children being recruited for suicide operations and the presence of approximately 11,000 suspected Da'esh members in Syrian Democratic Forces' facilities. The recruitment of children for suicide operations is an abominable practice that should be roundly and unequivocally condemned. We must also work to prevent the exploitation of children in terrorist activities and prioritize their protection and well-being.

In conclusion, we highlight the need to remain alert to the agility and adaptability of terrorist groups, and emphasize the need for international cooperation and capacity-building if we are to avoid gaps in national efforts, which could create vulnerabilities in the global fight against terrorism. We underscore the importance of ensuring non-selectivity in our counter-terrorism response, since terrorism, regardless of its forms or manifestations, presents a danger to the international community. We must acknowledge the gravity of the situation and recognize that no single country can combat terrorism alone. Together we can overcome the expansionist and nefarious agenda of Da'esh.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Gherman for their briefings today, as well as the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team for its work in producing the report (S/2023/568). I also thank Ms. Khalaf for her powerful testimony. Her harrowing account of Da'esh's atrocities serves as a reminder of the lifelong impact of those crimes and the poisonous ideology that we are fighting. All survivors of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, including Yazidis and other communities in Iraq, deserve to see justice delivered. We support Iraq and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) in pursuing accountability for Da'esh perpetrators, and we look forward to renewing UNITAD's mandate next month to continue that important work.

Da'esh continues to suffer blows to its campaign, including the death in April of its leader Abu Al-Husseini Al-Qurashi. However, the threat is becoming less predictable and harder to detect and investigate. We must therefore keep up the pressure. A resurgent Da'esh core in Syria and Iraq remains a real risk. Internally displaced persons camps provide a fertile ground for radicalization in which Da'esh can recruit and operate. In Al-Hol camp, the United Kingdom is focusing its efforts on improving the situation through humanitarian assistance by responding to gender-based violence and providing child protection.

As we have heard, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) continues to show that it has the capacity to carry out high-profile attacks on civilian and international targets inside Afghanistan and to encourage attacks abroad. Earlier this year, the United Kingdom convened an inaugural IS-KP

diplomatic grouping, which saw 19 countries come together and agree to intensify and coordinate their response in order to counter the threat from IS-KP. Last month, the United Kingdom published a refresh of its national counter-terrorism strategy to ensure that we remain agile in the face of an evolving threat and aligned with our international allies.

In Africa, Da'esh is expanding fast. All of us in the international community should step up our efforts. We must address the root causes that are driving conflict in the region and enabling the expansion of violent extremist organizations. In the Sahel, the United Kingdom is providing financial support to the United Nations Regional Stabilization Facility for the Lake Chad basin, an initiative that will support local communities.

Finally, the United Nations plays a key role in the fight against terrorism. The United Kingdom welcomed the adoption of the eighth review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, through General Assembly resolution 77/298. International coordination with a meaningful role for civil society remains essential to our work.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I commend the Secretary-General for his thorough report (S/2023/568) and thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Executive Director Gherman and Ms. Khalaf, President of the Farida Global Organization, for their detailed presentations.

There has been significant progress in the fight against Da'esh. We are encouraged by the fact that it has lost control over vast areas of territory and that terror attacks have been prevented or disrupted. Yet the menace is still there. Da'esh has been resorting to innovative means, such as cryptocurrencies and crowdfunding, to finance its activities. It has also maintained its capacity to spread hateful propaganda and recruit people through social media platforms. We remain concerned about the group's growing activities on the African continent and its strong presence in places such as Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

As the report shows, the resurgence of terrorism is higher in conflict-affected settings. That reminds us that terrorism and armed conflict are mutually reinforcing. A more durable solution to that scourge lies in comprehensive strategies that tackle the root causes of both conflict on the one hand, and radicalization and violent extremism conducive to terrorism on the other.

Social exclusion, youth unemployment, xenophobia, discrimination, prejudice and the calamity of war are the breeding grounds of terrorism. The international community should favour investment in development over military action if it really wants to win its battle against terrorism. It is important to focus more on preventive measures and peaceful means of dispute settlement. We must enhance cooperation on counter-terrorism. Brazil acknowledges the crucial role that regional and subregional counter-terrorist operations play in fighting terrorism.

In late June, we achieved consensus on the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy, which the General Assembly adopted (see General Assembly resolution 77/298). That conveyed a welcome message of unity and partnership that is much needed to face the current challenges. However, we also need to do more when it comes to our negotiations in the United Nations on instruments in general and in norms and definitions in particular. There is still no agreement on the exact parameters of what constitutes terrorism under international law. The lack of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism affects our ability to counter it in a coherent and collective manner.

We must reiterate that the Security Council should not let the lack of clarity on issues with criminal repercussions be the norm in its work. The Council should respect due process when designating new terrorist individuals or entities. Decisions on the listing of terrorist individuals and entities must be based on solid evidence, leaving no loopholes that would ultimately be counterproductive in the fight against terrorism. Furthermore, the Council has the responsibility to ensure that its decisions do not impede impartial humanitarian assistance from reaching civilians in need, nor cause more suffering — the very thing it is mandated to prevent. The unintended consequences of counter-terrorism measures must be thoroughly addressed. Counter-terrorist action should be regulated in such a manner as to allow the humane, neutral and impartial work of humanitarian and medical practitioners, in full compliance with international humanitarian law. That is crucial in order to ensure that our actions effectively contribute to eradicating terrorism without creating collateral damage.

Having said that, Brazil condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and under any pretexts or justifications. Our Constitution enshrines the repudiation of terrorism as a guiding principle of both our domestic and foreign policy. We remain ready to cooperate in the fight against that hideous phenomenon.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Executive Director Gherman and Ms. Farida Khalaf for their briefings.

As the President of Switzerland said in March, “the confidence of our people is absolutely crucial to depriving terrorism of its breeding ground in the long term”. He identified four elements necessary for achieving that: the rule of law, prevention, partnerships and inclusion. Those elements are also included in the Secretary-General’s New Agenda for Peace. The terrorist threat, particularly in conflict zones, is becoming more complex. In his report (S/2023/568), the Secretary-General demonstrates the extent to which the regional affiliates of Da’esh are becoming more autonomous and involved in local dynamics. In the light of those worrisome developments, it is all the more urgent to invest in those four areas in order to break the cycle of violence. Our response must take into account the many political, economic and social causes of terrorism and fully respect international law. Moreover, inclusive dialogue and strengthened international, regional and local cooperation will make our responses more effective. In that regard, allow me to address two points.

First, the fight against terrorism must always take place within the framework of international law. Let us respond to terrorism, which denies human rights, by protecting and strengthening those same rights. Ms. Khalaf explained that terrorist groups use various forms of sexual and gender-based violence to destroy and control communities, displace populations, spread fear and advance their cause. Our responses to such atrocities must focus on the victims. Such crimes must not be repeated, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice. Civil society and human rights defenders are crucial partners in this task and must be able to operate in safe and respectful conditions.

Secondly, access to new technologies by terrorist groups and their affiliates represents a major risk. There should be efforts to counter, for example, the use of social networks or virtual currencies to spread hatred, prepare attacks and finance terrorist activities. At the same time, we must not hinder the vast possibilities that new technologies can offer our societies simply for fear of their misuse. On the contrary, such technologies can also be used as instruments for effectively preventing and combating terrorism, but only if they are used

in accordance with international law, human rights and international humanitarian law. Switzerland supports an inclusive dialogue in that regard among key partners, including civil society, the private sector and academia. We must discuss ways in which we can use new technological developments to our advantage. The objective remains to prevent and counter the threat posed by Da'esh and other designated terrorist groups in the framework of our collective efforts.

In conclusion, it is urgent for us to invest more in the prevention of conflict and violent extremism and in ensuring respect for and the promotion of human rights and international humanitarian law, including rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid. A failure to do so would serve only to exacerbate the conditions conducive to terrorism. If we want to contain the threat posed by terrorist organizations, we must address the grievances exploited by those organizations and offer alternatives based on adherence to the rule of law and open, prosperous and inclusive societies.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Gherman for their briefings, and I commend the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate for their contribution to the global fight against terrorism. I also listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Khalaf, the civil society representative.

At present, terrorism continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. In the past month, terrorist attacks occurred in Pakistan and Iran, causing heavy casualties. That fully demonstrates that the fight against terrorism remains an uphill journey that requires strengthened international solidarity and coordination in and all-out effort to curb the spread of terrorist forces. I would like to stress the following four points.

First, we need to synergize international counter-terrorism efforts. Terrorists operate extensively in a complex network of fast-moving personnel, which is beyond the capacity of any country to deal with alone. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/568) clearly states that multilateral cooperation has remained essential to effectively responding to the threat of terrorism. We should all uphold a collective, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security concept, support the United Nations in playing a central coordinating role in counter-terrorism operations, fully

implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and build the broadest-based united front against terrorism.

Secondly, we must refrain from politicizing counter-terrorism. There are no good or bad terrorists. When it comes to terrorist organizations and individuals designated by the Council, all countries are obligated to strictly implement the relevant sanctions. Double standards and selectivity on counter-terrorism are, in essence, condoning terrorist activities and undermining the effectiveness of international counter-terrorism cooperation. We oppose linking terrorism to specific countries, ethnic groups and religions, or allowing terrorist groups to germinate, grow and launch violent attacks under the pretext of protecting minorities and religious freedom.

Thirdly, we must eliminate the breeding grounds for terrorism. Lack of development is one of the root causes of the spread of terrorism. The international community must help developing countries improve their economies, eradicate poverty, enhance education and expand employment in order to protect young people from indoctrination and incitement by extremist ideologies. The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/568) shows that regional conflicts are another factor fuelling the increase in terrorist threats. We should step up our efforts to promote political settlements of hotspot issues and seek to stabilize situations, leaving no opportunity for terrorists to exploit them. Countries should also promote equal dialogue and harmonious coexistence among civilizations and religions, reject the so-called theory of the clash of civilizations and remove the soil in which extremist ideas can take root.

Fourthly, we must optimize the allocation of resources. At present, the international community should focus on addressing major issues, such as the misuse by terrorists of emerging technologies, the diversification of terrorist financing and the nexus between terrorism, transnational organized crime and inadequate border control and law enforcement, by enhancing information- and experience-sharing and fostering judicial cooperation. Since Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and other regions are on the front lines of international counter-terrorism efforts, in the light of the needs of the countries of those regions, the United Nations and the international community should channel more resources, as appropriate, and support the countries concerned in strengthening their

counter-terrorism capacity at the legislative, judicial and law-enforcement levels so as to enhance counter-terrorism effectiveness.

China condemns all forms of terrorism and has continued to attach great importance to international cooperation on counter-terrorism, actively participating in it and supporting the United Nations in playing a central coordinating role. In recent years, through the China-United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund, we have provided training and equipment to the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other entities to help developing countries prevent and combat terrorism. We have also carried out counter-terrorism cooperation with countries of the region, under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. China will continue to work with all sides to combat terrorism and maintain international peace and security in order to create a tranquil and peaceful world for all.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Executive Director Gherman and Ms. Khalaf for their information and introductory briefings.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/568) confirms the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, known as Da'esh, to international peace and security. That terrorist group continues to take advantage local fragilities to promote violent extremism, especially in Iraq, Syria and some regions of Africa. The situation in Afghanistan is a particular cause for concern owing to the ability of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant–Khorasan to continue its attacks in the region, as occurred on 30 July in Pakistan and on 13 August in Iran, for which Da'esh has claimed responsibility. My delegation would like to comment on five points in the Secretary-General's report.

First, we must continue to address the sources of funding for Da'esh. To do so, we must build the capacities of international organizations responsible for controlling assets laundering and the use of virtual assets. We therefore welcomed the entry of the International Monetary Fund into the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact in May, which will contribute to multilateral efforts to address the issue.

Secondly, there is a need to limit access to conventional and improvised weapons, including components of uncrewed aerial systems, which,

together with the use of information technology, are essential to organizing and carrying out terrorist attacks. The implementation of resolution 2370 (2017), and the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) to ensure that those weapons do not fall into the hands of non-State actors, are crucial to addressing those challenges.

Thirdly, urgent measures should be taken to alleviate the serious humanitarian conditions that persist in detention centres in northern Syria. They primarily affect women and children and provide an ideal environment for Da'esh to recruit new members. We call for humanitarian organizations to be allowed to return to those areas.

Fourthly, we support the Secretary-General's call to prioritize actions aimed at addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. Ecuador reiterates its position that counter-terrorism must include a focus on addressing the problematic socioeconomic conditions prevailing in many countries.

Lastly, in the wake of the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, which we marked on 21 August, we want to see the victims of Da'esh remain a priority for the United Nations, especially those who are victims of sexual or gender-based violence and continue to face stigmatization because of it. We underscore the importance of the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to that end.

Terrorism is a transnational threat to which no country is immune, which means that international cooperation in combating it is indispensable. We therefore welcome the General Assembly's adoption of the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in June of this year through its resolution 77/298. It sends a message that terrorism is unacceptable in any form or manifestation, and that as Member States we have decided to take joint measures to prevent and combat it. Similarly, we note the counter-terrorism elements contained in the New Agenda for Peace.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): I would like to thank the United States presidency of the Council for convening today's meeting on a critical matter, and Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Gherman for their insights on such a pressing topic. We also express our thanks to Ms. Farida Khalaf for her briefing.

It has been a little more than two decades since the Council began to consider, via its resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001), that acts of international terror are a threat to international peace and security wherever and by whomever they are committed. Violent extremism remains a global issue and one of Africa's most pressing security threats. In many parts of the world, including in Africa, militant armed groups employing asymmetric tactics and infiltrating local communities have been able to amplify local grievances and intercommunal differences in order to mobilize recruitment and foment anti-Government sentiment. We are indeed witnessing a rising and global spread of terrorism, especially in Africa, where fatalities linked to Al-Qaida and Da'esh militant groups reached more than 22,000 over the past 12 months, representing a 48 per cent increase from the previous year.

In his remarks to the Security Council last March, President Nyusi of the Republic of Mozambique stated:

“The expansion of terrorism is a significant threat and is driven by factors that vary from one context to another. On the one hand, radicalization is based on identity variables that are fuelled by intolerance, and on the other hand, the manipulation of socio-economic factors has accelerated recruitment by terrorist groups, particularly among young people.” (S/PV.9296, p. 5).

Poverty, inequality, social exclusion and discrimination based on religion and culture are critical root conditions that need to be addressed more urgently if we are to stem the spread of terrorism. Countries are called to redouble their efforts to combat criminal activities, such as money-laundering and illegal mining, as well as the trafficking of arms, drugs, precious minerals, antiquities and human beings, which provide funding for terrorism. Moreover, we observe with concern the risks associated with the misuse of new and emerging technology by terrorist groups, including online gaming and adjacent platforms, which allow them to manipulate the digital space, communicate, recruit, spread narratives and plan attacks.

As the Secretary-General pointed out early this year, terrorism is the root cause and the result of many of the problems under consideration by the Security Council. It goes without saying that we must remain united against terrorism. We must renew our commitments to strengthening international cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirm that any act of terrorism is criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of the motivation behind it.

As far as preventing and combating terrorism is concerned, we commend the work and support of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in building the capacities of countries to prevent, detect and investigate international travel by terrorists. These efforts should be enhanced, and opportunities given to more affected countries. We also encourage further efforts to enhance the capacities of States to counter the misuse of new technologies by terrorists.

We wish to reiterate our call for a fruitful collaboration and cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. Among several examples of commendable achievements made in Africa by African Union peace support operations, we would cite the African Union Mission in Somalia and its successor mission, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia.

The deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) to fight terrorism is another clear example of successful regional counter-terrorism collaboration. Accordingly, I wish to share with the Council some news out of Mozambique, where counter-terrorism efforts have been yielding positive results. In a combined operation with our armed forces, our partners Rwanda and SAMIM, neutralized, over the past two days, the leadership and masterminds of the terrorist group in Cabo Delgado. We will continue to build on this success until terrorism is eradicated from Mozambique.

In our coordinated mechanisms for addressing the conditions that contribute to the spread of terrorism, we need to redouble our efforts to end poverty and combat exclusion and inequality. We must also invest in building community resilience. The importance of social connection between communities and governing bodies or institutions cannot be overstated. Government agencies, defence and security forces, and international peace support operations must partner with local communities to provide early-warning systems for early intervention against terrorism and violent extremism.

More importantly, we must note that there is no better and more efficient remedy to the threat posed by terrorism than prevention. History demonstrates the limits of merely responding to imminent or actual terrorist acts without addressing the conditions that lead to them. In this regard, for an effective eradication of this scourge, we encourage greater investments not only in addressing the root causes, but also in renewing a terrorism-prevention mechanism that is coordinated with Member States.

In conclusion, Mozambique supports all efforts aimed at the practical implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy as well as the relevant United Nations resolutions on counter-terrorism and violent extremism, including, inter alia, the protection of women, youth and all segments of society against terrorism.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, and Ms. Gherman, Executive Director, for their comprehensive briefings. We also thank Ms. Farida Khalaf for her moving briefing, which highlighted the heinous crimes that women and girls have been subjected to as a result of terrorist acts as well as the critical role women play in counter-terrorism.

Despite the tangible progress achieved by the international community in countering terrorism, terrorist groups continue to adapt their methods and change their strategies to fulfil their objective of destabilizing international peace and security. We therefore believe that the report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by on Da'esh and Al-Qaida (S/2023/568) prepared in conjunction with the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team and other entities, is extremely important for shedding light on the methods, patterns and movements of the terrorist organization, Da'esh, thereby enabling the international community to effectively counter it.

Among the worrisome developments that the report notes in that regard is the continued use of technologies for terrorist purposes and Da'esh's exploitation of acts of Islamophobia, such as burning of the Holy Qur'an, to fuel extremism and hate speech and calls for terrorist attacks. Another concerning development that the report highlights is related to the continued ability of terrorist groups in Africa to expand their control and take advantage of conflicts, deteriorating economic conditions and the security vacuum in areas outside of States' control. There are similar concerns about the terrorist activities carried out in other regions around the world.

We strongly condemn the use of sexual and gender-based violence by Da'esh and other terrorist groups as a tactical means of war, as it significantly and disproportionately affects women and girls and aims to humiliate and control populations. We therefore urgently need the international community to take a serious stand on deterring transnational terrorist threats, including by

coordinating efforts, supporting countries affected by conflicts and building their capacities. In that context, we look forward to the Africa Counter-Terrorism Summit organized by Nigeria and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, to be held early next year. With that in mind, my country would like to emphasize four points.

First, prevention measures must be strengthened by addressing the root causes of extremism before it ultimately leads to the killing of innocent people. Such measures should also focus on building peaceful and resilient societies against extremism. That requires a comprehensive whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach by investing in education, economic development and the promotion of interfaith and intercultural dialogue, as well as the empowerment of women and youth. To that end, my country participated in drafting the text of resolution 2686 (2023) on tolerance and international peace and security, which calls for a comprehensive approach in promoting the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence to address the causes of conflicts. The resolution also encourages all partners, including religious and community leaders, the media and social media platforms to address hate speech and extremism. We hope that tangible steps will be taken to implement the resolution, given its importance in immunizing our societies from the scourges of extremism and terrorism.

Secondly, terrorism should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. Any terrorist act is an unjustifiable crime. That why my country has been stressing the need to avoid using names related to religions in reference to terrorist groups, notably Da'esh. When the United Nations and the Security Council use the designation "Islamic State", they compromise the fact that there is no link between Islam and terrorism. Such designations are an integral part of terrorist groups' strategies to exploit religion to achieve their goals.

Thirdly, we must continue to develop our methods to prevent and counter terrorists' exploitation of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, drones, cryptocurrencies and digital platforms. If they fall into the hands of terrorist groups, that will constitute a dangerous threat to international peace and security. Therefore, agreeing on a common collective approach and strengthening legal frameworks to confront those threats, without limiting the ability to innovate, has become necessary and requires close cooperation among Governments and the private sector.

Fourthly, it is necessary to revitalize and accelerate work to adopt a comprehensive international convention on terrorism. Despite the existence of international conventions and resolutions to address the growing threat of terrorism, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, eradicating that scourge requires a comprehensive international convention to strengthen the international legal framework in that regard.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes that it will continue its efforts, including as Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee this year, to strengthen the United Nations counter-terrorism system.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) Natalia Gherman for their briefings. Also, I join others in thanking Ms. Farida Khalaf for her brave testimony to the Council about unimaginable hardships, including her personal hardships, under the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

We stress the importance of cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. Despite the progress made in targeting its financial operations and leadership, the threat posed by ISIL and its regional affiliates remains high.

As pointed out in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2023/568), developments in parts of Africa and the activities of ISIL-Khorasan in Afghanistan remain of deep concern.

I will highlight the following three key areas, which we believe are necessary to prevent and counter the threat of terrorism.

First, we should continue to address the financing of terrorism, including through emerging technologies such as virtual assets. Japan supports the initiatives of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on accelerating global implementation of the FATF standards on virtual assets. We encourage all Member States to apply risk-based anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regulations to virtual asset service providers in line with resolution 2462 (2019).

Secondly, Japan remains deeply concerned about the misuse of technology by terrorists. In particular, as we are all aware, the development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has been remarkable. In June, Japan hosted a side-event with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, CTED and Australia during counter-terrorism week to facilitate discussions on the malicious use of generative AI for terrorist purposes. Japan is committed to leading discussions in that sphere, including through the Hiroshima AI Process, towards a human-centric and trustworthy AI.

Thirdly, we emphasize the importance of appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and their families. We need to make efforts to strengthen local administration capacities, thereby reducing their vulnerabilities to terrorism and violent extremism. Japan has supported capacity-building assistance through United Nations agencies in areas, including border control, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration and maritime security.

Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. We will spare no efforts to prevent and counter terrorism, which is integral to maintaining the foundation of the free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Finally, yet importantly, Japan welcomes the adoption of the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 77/298) by consensus in June. We believe the spirit of consensus enables us to express our united will and commitment on global counter-terrorism efforts.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Gherman for their briefings. I would also like to thank Ms. Farida Khalaf for sharing with us her bitter yet touching experience.

Albania condemns all forms and shapes of terrorism. And we express our condolences to the families of victims of terrorist attacks.

We share the Secretary-General's assessment that the threat of Da'esh and affiliates to peace and security remains high in conflict zones. Terrorist organizations continue to find new ways to use emerging technology to carry out deadly attacks targeting United Nations peacekeepers, civilians and civilian infrastructure.

That must be stopped. Despite significant leadership losses and United Nations coordinated efforts in fighting terrorism, Da'esh has continued to expand its activities, particularly in Africa, where it is nurtured by existing conflicts and local grievances.

We remain concerned about the increase of such activities in Afghanistan. It is very important to prevent the country from becoming a haven for terrorists, and we urge the Taliban to adhere to their commitments made in that regard.

We are concerned about the dire humanitarian situation of the detainees in Al-Hol and Al-Roj camps, particularly about the situation of women and children. They require the urgent attention of the Council and other United Nations agencies.

We believe that United Nations members should repatriate their nationals in line with their obligations. That requires effective repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, in which gender considerations need to be incorporated.

The use and consequences of sexual and gender-based violence committed by Da'esh are deeply concerning. The report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2023/568) notes that many victims of terrorism, particularly those who have experienced sexual or gender-based violence perpetrated by Da'esh, continue to face stigmatization, with children born out of rape severely affected. We welcome the United Nations work in this area, including the support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to Yazidi survivors who experienced conflict-related sexual violence. We must invest more in victims' protection programmes.

Countering terrorism is a priority we all share. Albania supports a whole-of-society approach that respects human rights, aligns with international law, is gender-sensitive and addresses the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. We also welcome an emphasis on interreligious and intercultural dialogue as effective tools in preventing and fighting terrorism. In that respect, we should also focus our efforts on the implementation of resolution 2462 (2019) in order to counter the financing of terrorism. Here, we believe the role of international cooperation is very

important. The implementation of Financial Action Task Force standards is vital in cutting off financing for terrorist purposes.

In conclusion, Albania reiterates its commitment to fighting terrorism and to successfully implementing the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in particular the fourth pillar concerning human rights and the rule of law.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Gherman for their briefings. I especially thank Ms. Khalaf for her contribution and the courage she displayed in sharing her personal story with us today. It further underlines the need for the Council to insist on ensuring justice and accountability.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2023/568) is clear. Despite some notable progress, the threat posed by Da'esh and its regional affiliates remains high across the broad geographic areas in which it is present. In Iraq and Syria, Da'esh maintains its insurgency and the ability to conduct asymmetric attacks. The situation in Africa is also worrisome, with a complex interplay between terrorism, conflict, food insecurity, climate change and a lack of socioeconomic opportunities. Malta is concerned about increasing terrorist violence in the regions of the Sahel, the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa.

In addition, while Da'esh affiliates in North Africa are weakened, we are alarmed by recent Da'esh activities in Libya, including reports of the recruitment of scientists focused on the development of biological materials. Likewise, we are concerned that the Sudan may now serve as a hub for the transfer of North African fighters to southern Libya.

Furthermore, ongoing developments in Afghanistan are extremely troubling, with Da'esh-Khorasan increasing its operational capacities in the country. That threat also extends to the wider region, with the group claiming responsibility for the deadly terrorist attack in north-west Pakistan at the end of July.

Terrorist groups are exploiting socioeconomic grievances, as well as governance and accountability deficits, to radicalize and recruit, particularly in Africa. However, militarized approaches predominate, with insufficient attention to and investment in actions to tackle the underlying drivers of violent extremism. We echo the Secretary-General's call to prioritize and step up prevention efforts. Otherwise, we resign ourselves to addressing the same security challenges repeatedly.

Effective responses to preventing and countering terrorism require whole-of-society approaches, including meaningful engagement with civil society, local communities, women and youth. We must ensure that counter-terrorism measures are more sensitive to local realities by enhancing the avenues available to civil society to engage with the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture.

In addition, Malta shares the Secretary-General's view that counter-terrorism efforts must be firmly anchored in human rights and the rule of law. Too often, measures to counter terrorism, violent extremism and extremism more generally are misused to silence and repress those advocating for human rights, including human rights defenders and civil society. Counter-terrorism measures must always comply with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Malta reiterates its support for a gender-responsive approach to counter-terrorism. We were pleased to convene an Arria formula meeting on gender and counter-terrorism in June with diverse, cross-regional co-sponsorship and participation. One of the main concerns highlighted during that meeting was sexual and gender-based violence in terrorist contexts. The issue, which disproportionately affects women and girls, deserves adequate attention from the Council and its subsidiary organs dealing with terrorism. Today's powerful yet harrowing personal testimony by Ms. Khalaf about the sexual violence perpetrated by Da'esh against the Yazidi community reinforces that point even further. We look forward to the upcoming publication of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate's study on accountability for sexual and gender-based violence in terrorist contexts and welcome the organization of an expert group meeting on the topic in May.

Before concluding, Malta welcomes the recent adoption of the eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (see General Assembly resolution 77/298). As the world grapples with a multitude of crises and challenges, we are pleased that multilateral consensus on counter-terrorism has been maintained.

Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Gherman, Mr. Voronkov and Ms. Khalaf for their briefings.

I wish to emphasize two points.

The challenges of international terrorism remain immense. Da'esh and Al-Qaida are resilient, expanding their presence in several countries and continents — including in the Levant, Africa, Afghanistan and Central Asia — and have demonstrated an ongoing capacity to carry out cross-border attacks and beyond. We note in particular the growing threat from Da'esh in the Sahel and around the Gulf of Guinea.

Those groups thrive on the breeding ground formed by rights violations, the exclusion of women and gender-based inequalities. Sexual violence is also used on a massive scale by terrorist groups. The atrocities committed by Da'esh against women from the Yazidi community are well known and documented. Socioeconomic fragility, violence and political instability, conflict, climate crises and tensions over natural resources also have a direct impact on the development and persistence of the terrorist threat.

That is why the security response, in which France is wholeheartedly playing its part, remains essential — but it is not enough. Initiatives aimed at promoting development and strengthening governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption are essential as well. Such a response must also ensure respect for human rights, in contrast to the actions of the Wagner Group, which has made mass atrocities the cardinal principle of its actions and is strengthening terrorism.

Our collective efforts must therefore continue in five directions.

First, we must continue to promote a multidimensional approach. In the Levant, France remains mobilized as part of the international counter-Da'esh coalition. Allow me to pay a heartfelt tribute here to the two French soldiers killed in recent days in the tireless fight against terrorism. In addition to that commitment, in 2023 France will allocate €86.5 million to humanitarian and stabilization efforts in Iraq and Syria, including for a specific initiative for the camps in north-eastern Syria. In recent years, France has repatriated 171 minors accompanied by 57 mothers, while putting in place robust care and legal procedures.

Secondly, it is essential to combat impunity and provide better support for victims of sexual violence. France is contributing €8.2 million to the Global Fund for Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

More generally, we cannot dissociate the fight against terrorism from the fight for women's rights, particularly in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, it is crucial that our responses remain adapted to changes in the terrorist threat. That is why, in the fight against the financing of terrorism, France is mobilizing within the framework of the No Money for Terror initiative, which takes into account all methods of financing terrorism, including cryptocurrencies. That is also why France supports the work initiated by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to implement the Delhi Declaration.

Fourthly, we need to make full use of the tools at the disposal of the United Nations. I am referring, of course, to Council sanctions, but also to the capacity-building actions carried out by the Office of Counter-Terrorism. France has decided to double its voluntary contribution to the Office in 2023 for the benefit of those African countries that request it, according to their needs.

Finally, we will continue our fight against terrorism within a partnership framework, including regional and international organizations. That is the aim, in particular, of the International Academy for the Fight Against Terrorism, which was established by Côte d'Ivoire and France in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and is now in the process of being internationalized.

Mrs. Onanga (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing today's briefing on the seventeenth report (S/2023/568) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Da'esh and its affiliates to international peace and security. I would also like to thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov from the Office of Counter-Terrorism and Ms. Natalia Gherman of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate for sharing their insights on Da'esh's activities since our previous meeting on this agenda item (see S/PV.9257). And I would be remiss not to thank Ms. Farida Khalaf for her extensive testimony.

Gabon remains deeply alarmed by the terrorist threat posed by Da'esh. My delegation notes with great concern the persistence of that threat, especially in conflict zones, where terrorists operate more frequently. The current alarming situation demonstrates that terrorist organizations are taking advantage of the structural weaknesses affecting a number of countries. Worse still, terrorist entities are constantly on the lookout for new instruments with which to sow terror,

which underscores their strong capability to transform and adapt. We need to redouble our efforts to contain and reverse that worrisome trend, particularly in the Sahel and West Africa, where the threat is becoming more acute.

Gabon fully supports measures aimed at eradicating this global scourge and its tendency to spread, in particular those set out in resolution 2253 (2015). We take this opportunity to welcome the General Assembly's adoption in June of resolution 77/298, on its eighth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. That adoption represents a significant step forward in strengthening the Strategy, in particular by taking into account the new threats in the evolution of terrorism.

Gabon welcomes the concerted efforts that have helped to weaken and destabilize Da'esh, notably by neutralizing several of its leaders. However, we must not let our guard down, as those small groups have shown resilience and an ability to adapt in order to pursue their goals. That is particularly evident in their ability to raise huge sums of money, enabling them not only to recruit new fighters but also to take advantage of social vulnerabilities. We need to address that enormous challenge and strengthen our efforts to combat all the affiliated organizations and offshoots likely to facilitate organized crime through Da'esh's use of illicit weapons, which is aimed at increasing its capabilities considerably. In that context, the commendable efforts made by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNESCO to reduce Da'esh's capacity to mobilize and deploy massive resources for criminal purposes deserve to be stepped up and supported.

Da'esh's ability to acquire large quantities of small arms and light weapons, which fuel instability and violence in Africa, particularly in the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin, but also in the Great Lakes region, is a matter of great concern. The African continent's coordinated response in that regard has made it possible to counter the activities of Da'esh and reduce its capacity to cause harm. Having demonstrated their determination to vigorously combat the terrorist threat on their continent, the African countries should legitimately benefit from the support of the international community. That should enable them to initiate targeted, well-planned and more robust peace

support operations under the mandate of the African Union Peace and Security Council, endorsed by the Security Council on a case-by-case basis, as judiciously recommended by the Secretary-General. In order to achieve that, we need to mobilize substantial financial and logistical resources, including through our assessed contributions to the Organization, on the basis of the principle of the indivisibility of collective security.

The many challenges to international peace and security posed by terrorist movements call for constant vigilance and concerted efforts on all fronts in order to better equip the affected countries, which need to strengthen their capacities, particularly in mastering the new information technologies used by Da'esh to spread its criminal activities. That is a fundamental requirement, as terrorist groups will continue to act opportunistically by trying to establish themselves in regions in which they identify weak links. In that regard, I reaffirm the commitments we made in the Delhi declaration and the need to implement its relevant recommendations.

In the same vein, my country welcomes the ongoing efforts to establish Da'esh's criminal responsibility for all the atrocities it has committed. In that respect, the work carried out by UNITAD and the efforts of the Office on Drugs and Crime deserve to be highlighted.

We must also ensure to maintain the highest standards in the promotion of human rights in our fight against terrorism, in accordance with resolution 1624 (2005). We welcome the courageous measures taken by some countries to ensure the protection of the wives and children of Da'esh fighters, who suffer the consequences of the terrorist acts carried out by the group, notably through their repatriation to their countries of origin.

The growing threat posed by the activities of Da'esh calls for greater regional and international cooperation. In that regard, I would like to commend Under-Secretary-General Voronkov for the efforts made by his Office to promote a targeted response to the scourge of terrorism, both regionally and globally.

In conclusion, it is important to recall the challenges that the terrorist threat posed by Da'esh continues to pose, including its heightened activity in Africa and in conflict zones. We must also continue to act with a heightened sense of shared responsibility and strengthen international cooperation to deal more effectively with this threat faced by all of us. That requires unwavering solidarity in order to better equip those countries and regions that are most at risk and not necessarily fully equipped to meet the challenges posed by the growing terrorist threat worldwide.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.