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Provisional

President: Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium)

Members:

China	Mr. Wu Haitao
Dominican Republic	Mr. Bencosme Castaños
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mr. Michon
Germany	Mr. Schulz
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Niger	Mr. Aougi
Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
South Africa	Mr. Van Shalkwyk
Tunisia	Mr. Ben Lagha
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Allen
United States of America	Mr. Barkin
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Tenth 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/2020/95)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

Tenth 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/2020/95)

The President (*spoke in French*): 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, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism; Ms. Michèle Coninsx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate; and Ms. Mona Freij, civil society representative.

Ms. Freij is joining today's meeting via video-conference from Istanbul.

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/2020/95, which contains the tenth 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.

I now give the floor to Mr. Voronkov.

Mr. Voronkov: Let me begin by expressing my sincere condolences to Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Nigeria, Somalia and all other Member States that recently suffered terrorist attacks. My heartfelt thoughts and sympathy go to the survivors and the families of the victims.

I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the tenth report (S/2020/95) 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, as mandated by resolution 2368 (2017).

As members of the Security Council are aware, the report was prepared by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), led by Ms. Coninsx, and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015), concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, led by Mr. Edmund Fitton-Brown, in close collaboration with my Office, with contributions from other United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities.

ISIL lost its last stronghold in the Syrian Arab Republic in March last year and saw a change in leadership after the death of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi in October; but this report shows that the group remains at the centre of the transnational terrorism threat. We must stay vigilant and united in confronting this scourge. ISIL has continued to seek resurgence and global relevance online and offline, aspiring to re-establish its capacity for complex international operations. ISIL's regional affiliates continue to pursue a strategy of entrenchment in conflict zones by exploiting local grievances.

Due to their high number, foreign terrorist fighters who travelled to Iraq and Syria are expected to continue to pose an acute short-, medium- and long-term threat, with estimates of those alive ranging from 20,000 to almost 27,000. The situation of ISIL fighters and associated family members in detention and displacement facilities in Iraq and Syria has worsened since I presented to the Council the ninth report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/612) on the threat posed by the group (see S/PV.8605). Their fate remains a major challenge to the international community. ISIL has become increasingly focused on freeing them. Meanwhile, most Member States have not yet assumed responsibility for the repatriation of their nationals. The report of the Secretary-General also highlights relevant activities of United Nations entities in support of Member States over the past six months, especially in the light of the requirements under resolutions 2396 (2017), 2462 (2019), 2467 (2019), and 2482 (2019).

In the Middle East, ISIL's reconstitution as a covert network in Syria follows a similar pattern to that followed in Iraq since 2017. The north-east of Syria has seen a spike in attacks targeting the international coalition against Da'esh and local non-State armed groups. Along the Syrian-Iraqi border, the crossing of fighters in both directions presents a challenge.

The most pressing challenge, however, is the untenable situation of the more than 100,000 people who remain stranded in detention and displacement facilities in the north-east of Syria, of whom more than 70,000 are women and children in the Al-Hol camp. Their situation has short-to-long-term implications that require the urgent attention and action of all Member States concerned. The humanitarian crisis on the ground, together with issues related to physical security, the risk of escapees and the potential radicalization to violent extremism in the facilities, must be addressed.

Reports of children deprived of their liberty and interned in pre- and post-trial detention camps for their actual or alleged association with ISIL remain of concern. Children, including those with links to United Nations-listed terrorist groups, should be treated primarily as victims, and any prosecution should be conducted in accordance with internationally recognized standards. The best solution is to get those children out of harm's way and back to their home countries with the rest of their families as soon as possible.

I urge Member States to shoulder their primary responsibility for their nationals in terms of protection, repatriation, gender-sensitive and age-appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, consistent with all their obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. I commend Member States that have repatriated, or are in the process of repatriating, their nationals suspected of having links with United Nations-listed terrorist groups from Iraq and Syria.

With regard to Africa, in my previous briefing (see S/PV.8605) I reported a striking increase in ISIL- and Al-Qaida-linked recruitment and violence in the west of the continent. Unfortunately, the situation has further deteriorated and the trend is of even greater concern today as the Islamic State's West Africa Province in the Lake Chad basin reinforces its links to the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara.

In Europe, there are concerns about the anticipated release this year of approximately 1,000 terrorism-related convicts, including frustrated travellers and returned foreign terrorist fighters, which is compounded by persisting concerns about the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes. The continued threat of online terrorist radicalization and ISIL-inspired attacks by lone actors are also of concern.

In Asia, ISIL's affiliate in Afghanistan suffered a major setback in November 2019, with its virtual expulsion from what had been its Afghan headquarters in Nangarhar province. Nonetheless, ISIL remains active, ambitious and threatening in the country and has established informal contacts with other terrorist groups. In South-East Asia, securing porous maritime borders to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters is a challenge. Another persistent concern is the role of women in the operational planning, financing and execution of terrorist attacks in the region.

I would like to highlight a few of the important activities of my Office that are mentioned in the report. Those efforts are possible only thanks to the generous financial support of all our donors, including our three largest donors — the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the European Union.

Council members will recall that, at our previous briefing, I reported on the development by the United Nations system of the key principles to support Member States in the protection, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children with links to United Nations-listed terrorist groups. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre of my Office is now finalizing a project with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and CTED to support requesting Member States in that area, based on those principles and the addendum to the Madrid Guiding Principles.

The report also points out that countering the financing of terrorism should remain a key focus area. ISIL may still have as much as \$300 million in financial reserves. The need to cut access to funds for terrorists was reiterated by the Council in resolution 2462 (2019). In response to that resolution and in consultation with CTED, the Counter-Terrorism Centre has expanded its capacity-building efforts by developing a comprehensive global counter-terrorism financing programme.

In the area of law enforcement and border security, the implementation of the multi-agency United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, led by my Office to support Member States in implementing resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017) and 2482 (2019), has gained momentum. We currently count 33 confirmed beneficiaries in different regions and are at different stages of implementation in several pilot countries, including Azerbaijan, Ghana, the Sudan and Togo.

The Secretary-General's report also emphasizes that the diversion of small arms and light weapons, improvised explosive device components and their precursors continues to aggravate the situation in conflict zones. In that regard, the Counter-Terrorism Centre is launching a pilot project in Central Asia in collaboration with CTED, as well as UNODC and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, on the nexus between organized crime and terrorism, with a focus on the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their supply to terrorists, in line with resolutions 2370 (2017) and 2482 (2019).

During the reporting period, my Office has also continued to collaborate with partners to further the implementation of other relevant Security Council resolutions. Just a couple of days ago, Executive Director Coninx and I briefed the Counter-Terrorism Committee on the increasing cooperation between the Office of Counter-Terrorism and CTED and our efforts to ensure that our capacity-building activities respond to CTED recommendations.

Last week, the Counter-Terrorism Centre presented its work on strategic communications during an open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee on countering terrorist narratives in line with resolution 2354 (2017). CTED, INTERPOL and the Counter-Terrorism Centre have organized regional expert workshops to enhance the implementation of resolution 2341 (2017), on the protection of critical infrastructure, and resolution 2396 (2017), on soft targets. My Office has also developed a global programme on the protection of vulnerable targets, in close coordination with CTED and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

On Monday, we launched a new global programme on the security of major sporting events and the promotion of sports and its values to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism, in partnership with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the International Centre for Sport Security, which is based in Qatar.

As both the Council and the General Assembly have repeatedly emphasized, international counter-terrorism cooperation at all levels and with all relevant stakeholders is indispensable. I therefore welcome the initiative to invite a civil society briefer, Ms. Freij, to this meeting. Civil society has an active role to play in

support of efforts to prevent and counter terrorism, as indicated in resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017). The Madrid Guiding Principles and the addendum thereto also emphasize the importance of community engagement and civil society participation, particularly that of women, in addressing the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. The views of civil society are crucial to effective, context-specific rehabilitation and reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families.

My Office continues to sustain the momentum from the first United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States, held in 2018, through the organization of regional high-level conferences addressing priority issues under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Security Council resolutions. Since my previous briefing we have held successful regional conferences, in partnership with the Governments of Belarus, Hungary and the United Arab Emirates, with strong participation from Member States, civil society and regional and international organizations.

Next week we will convene a joint conference in Vienna with the Government of Switzerland and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, on the theme "Foreign terrorist fighters: addressing current challenges". In mid-March we will organize a regional conference with Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean Community on the implementation of regional counter-terrorist strategies.

At the same time, preparations are gaining speed for the second United Nations counter-terrorism week, which will be held from 29 June to 2 July, including the seventh biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The counter-terrorism week will contribute to the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of our Organization and will focus on building social and institutional resilience to terrorism. During that week, we will also hold the first-ever United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism and the second United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States.

At a time of heightened divisions among Member States, we cannot afford to jeopardize the global fight against terrorism. I am encouraged by today's reports about the death of the leader of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula — one of its deadliest regional affiliates. I

urge the Council and Member States to maintain and reaffirm their unity in the face of the persisting threat posed by ISIL and Al-Qaida and their affiliates, as well as terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. I urge the international community to maintain the sense of urgency and solidarity needed to save lives and support the victims and survivors of terrorism. The United Nations system will continue to play its role with determination in support of Member States.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Voronkov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Coninx.

Ms. Coninx: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the tenth report (S/2020/95) of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and the range of United Nations efforts to support Member States in countering the threat. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov for his overview of the report. I commend both the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Analytical and Sanctions Monitoring Team, led by Mr. Edmund Fitton-Brown, for their collaboration in preparing the report with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), among others.

I also welcome the opportunity to hear Ms. Mona Freij share her experiences as a survivor of ISIL rule and her efforts to heal her community and build resilience against future radicalization to violence. I commend Ms. Freij for her bravery and willingness to share her experiences with us today. It is vital that we listen to the voices of those directly affected by ISIL's atrocities and recognize the essential role played by women in building peaceful and resilient communities and preventing terrorism and violent extremism.

Despite its military defeat in the Syrian Arab Republic and the death of its leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, ISIL continues to adapt and evolve. We will continue to face significant challenges in countering its activities. The magnitude of the problem is well documented and the solutions are not easy, but inaction is not an option.

Thousands of ISIL-associated women and children remain in makeshift camps in appalling conditions. Leaving them to fight for survival, facing threats of further radicalization, would not only be contrary to our shared principles of humanity but also detrimental

to our counter-terrorism efforts. To help Member States better understand the associated challenges and trends, CTED published two analytical briefs in September on the repatriation of ISIL-associated women and children. They highlight current approaches and challenges, while emphasizing the urgent nature of the issue.

Understanding the motivations and drivers of radicalization among ISIL associates, including women, is complex and multifaceted. We should avoid stereotyping, generalization and oversimplification in developing appropriate policy responses, particularly as women have often had simultaneous roles as victims and perpetrators. They therefore require gender-responsive, tailored prosecution and rehabilitation strategies that are consistent with international human rights standards. Nevertheless, the rate of return of ISIL-associated women remains significantly lower than that of men and children.

Children, regardless of their affiliation, are primarily victims and must be dealt with as such. As the most vulnerable victims, they have experienced tremendous trauma and suffering under ISIL. The internment of a generation of children is neither acceptable nor sustainable. Through repatriation and rehabilitation efforts, the international community must work together to prevent recurring cycles of violence and further victimization and offer those children a life of dignity and safety. I welcome the steps taken by some Member States to repatriate all or some of their nationals from this group.

Other impacted States should also seek to develop and implement comprehensive repatriation strategies that are in line with international law, including the principle of non-refoulement. The longer we wait, the less likely we are to succeed. The ways in which we address prosecution, repatriation and rehabilitation efforts now will resonate for generations to come.

Bringing ISIL perpetrators to justice continues to be of critical importance. CTED has been working closely with Member States and United Nations agencies to facilitate support for that effort. We continue to help States identify gaps and facilitate delivery of technical assistance to strengthen national counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism responses. During our recent assessment visits to Africa, we noted the lack of mechanisms to address radicalization within correctional facilities, ineffective training of officials to manage violent extremist detainees and the absence

of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for prisoners upon release. Last November's Arria Formula meeting discussed those issues and highlighted the varying degrees of success among Member States' strategies to prevent radicalization in prisons and develop effective rehabilitation processes.

Terrorists continue to be adept at using the Internet to spread their propaganda and ideologies. That was the focus of discussion in last week's Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) open meeting, which emphasized the need for a whole-of-society approach in countering terrorist narratives. During our assessment visits and dialogue with Member States on behalf of the CTC, we have also seen the prosecution-related challenges associated with a lack of admissible evidence, a failure to guarantee due process and a fair trial, the determination of criminal responsibility and jurisdiction. All of those challenges undermine States' efforts to bring ISIL associates to justice through prosecution.

To mitigate one aspect of that problem, in December CTED issued the Military Evidence Guidelines, aimed at strengthening the collection, handling, preservation and use of evidence collected by the military to prosecute terrorism-related offences. Taken together with CTED's joint initiative with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on electronic evidence, the guidelines will help facilitate evidence collection and preservation for use in criminal and terrorist prosecutions, in compliance with international law. In that regard, I commend the efforts of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to collect and preserve witness testimony, including its recent support for prosecutions in Finland, to prosecute ISIL members for crimes committed in Iraq.

ISIL's depravity is evident from their numerous crimes. But its institutionalization of sexual violence and slavery requires special attention. I am deeply troubled by the continued lack of progress in bringing ISIL perpetrators of sexual violence to justice. Women and children abducted by ISIL have yet to be reunited with their families, numerous children conceived through rape lack legal recognition and a culture of impunity for sexual crimes persists. Member States must act decisively to address that issue. Adopting a survivor-centric and rights-based approach to judicial remedies and reparation efforts is the only way to deliver justice to the survivors. In that regard, I welcome the launch of

the Global Survivors Fund, which will provide much-needed reparations and redress mechanisms to victims of sexual violence worldwide.

ISIL has destroyed entire communities, uprooted families and brainwashed thousands by spreading its toxic and misguided ideology. Today the international community has an opportunity to prosecute the perpetrators, rehabilitate the victims and facilitate reconstruction and community development in places destroyed by ISIL violence. The repatriation of women and children will accelerate that process. And the prosecution of ISIL fighters and their affiliates, in accordance with international human rights law, will help bring closure to victims. This is one of the defining counter-terrorism challenges of our time. Inaction now will only make our future counter-terrorism efforts harder. In that regard, rest assured that CTED will continue to do its utmost to support the global counter-terrorism community in facing those challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Coninx for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Freij.

Ms. Freij (*spoke in Arabic*): I am grateful for this opportunity to share with the Security Council part of what I experienced in my city.

My name is Mona. I am from the city of Raqqa in north-east Syria. I received news of the death of my mother and brother while I was in exile. My last memories of them go back to mid-September 2014 before I left Syria, when elements of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh, armed to the teeth, burst into my house to arrest me. The sounds of shots fired in the air to scare us still ring in my head. I remember the pain I felt when I was pulled by the hair into the inner courtyard of the house. My mother fainted because her heart was broken. One of our neighbours stood up to Da'esh and created a problem with them to help me flee. Miraculously, I managed to escape. That a woman was able to escape made the Da'esh men furious. They believed it to be a failure and a stain on their reputation that a woman was able to flee the city in nearly 48 hours.

Because I escaped, my family suffered threats and intimidation. My brother's wife was arrested with her children, followed by my sister and my brother. They were tortured and traumatized and have not yet recovered. Raqqa was liberated from that tyrannical

regime and became a free city on 4 March 2013, which marked the birth of a genuine civil society in every sense. The members of that civil society were able to manage the city's affairs and distribute its resources, ensuring freedom throughout.

Since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, I have been working as an activist for women's rights in civil society institutions based on my sense of civic responsibility. I am convinced that women have a role in society free from gender stereotypes. I was one of the first women to work in local councils in Syria after 2011. I have always shed light on all the practices and violations that took place in my city, without fearing for possible consequences.

When Da'esh took down the cross from the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation in 2013, I participated in demonstrations to protest that action. I participated in the civil movement. We raised the cross and demonstrated in front of Da'esh headquarters calling for the release of detainees who, to this very day, have still not resurfaced. During one of those demonstrations I carried a sign calling for the fall of ISIL. My family and friends have been terrified ever since because of the brutality of Da'esh. I and others always tried to use peaceful means to resist Da'esh. We stressed education and raising awareness among children. We held secret classes in our homes, despite the dangers, including the threat of death. We knew that education and raising awareness were the only way to get rid of Da'esh.

After my escape I remained outside of Raqqa until the withdrawal of Da'esh, waiting for the right time to return. I did return, at the end of 2017, after the last elements of Da'esh had left the city. Back in Raqqa I was unable to recognize the terrified, incredulous faces of people who could not believe that the Da'esh nightmare was over.

Women were the most miserable and helpless. Everybody was a victim of Da'esh, but women were deprived of education at schools and universities. They could not leave their houses without a close relative male escort — a father, brother or an uncle. Young Girls could not travel for any reason, so as to ensure that they too would not receive education in areas not under Da'esh control.

I met young women taking care of orphaned children whose fathers had been killed in battles. The women told me they were forced to marry Da'esh fighters and bear their children. If they refused the sexual advances

of the fighters, they were beaten. They were unable to put an end to their pregnancies due to lack of medicine and medical treatment. They were semi detained and had to obey the orders of those monsters. Even today, those women have difficulty determining the paternity of their children.

My experience with tyranny did not begin with Da'esh and has not ended yet. Since I returned, I attempted as much as I could to create a safe space for women. I visited camps and listened to their needs. I was then in contact with certain organizations to meet those needs. I encouraged women to not give up on life while in the camps and to remain resilient by working. That is what some of them have done in their respective fields, such as nursing, sewing and even selling vegetables. Some of them have qualifications and are literate, so they took training courses in certain skills, such as using computers or child care. I also raised various issues, such as women's participation in public life and in the political arena, the importance of promoting women's empowerment, their cognitive and economic abilities as well as their participation in politics and decision-making.

Da'esh suffered a military defeat. Raqqa triumphed over terrorism, but not yet over tyranny. We attempted to vanquish tyranny since the very first day of the Syrian revolution. That tyranny has been personified by the Al-Assad regime. We continued to fight tyranny when it was personified by Da'esh. We cannot disregard the tyranny in Raqqa today.

My experience is not unique; it is similar to those of thousands of women in various parts of Syria. Those women have confronted tyranny, chanted for freedom and continue to demand their political, economic and social rights. They were faced with shootings, killings, oppression, rape, sexual slavery and forced displacement. What saddens me today is the fact that the international community has forgotten us.

As I address the Council, international law is being violated. Civilians in Idlib are the victims of premeditated bombings, perpetrated with weapons of all kinds. Such violence has continued for weeks and has led to the forced displacement of thousands of families, who are still seeking refuge. That reminds me of what took place in Raqqa and the spread of terrorism in it. It is now our fear that terrorism can spread to any city in Syria.

We request that the Security Council assist civilians in preventing another humanitarian disaster in Idlib, northern Syria and the rest of the country. Ceasefire and disarmament constitute the only path to finding a solution. All roads must now lead to Geneva so that serious negotiations can begin.

I would like to thank the delegation of Belgium for the opportunity to brief the Council. I, along with millions of Syrians, would be very grateful if the Council were to make every effort to launch a process of transitional justice in Syria and end impunity so that all those responsible for perpetrating serious human rights violations will be accountable. The political process should move forward in order to achieve a full political transition in Syria. The transition should meet the aspirations of Syrian men and women for a democratic, pluralistic regime that respects human rights.

Terrorism does not occur in a vacuum, and it does not happen by coincidence. It is the inevitable result of tyranny, repression, marginalization and the lack of democracy in a society.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Freij for her briefing.

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

Mr. Barkin (United States of America): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Assistant Secretary-General Coninx and the Monitoring Team of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, for their contributions to the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/95) on the evolving threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) and on continuing United Nations efforts to counter that threat.

I also thank Ms. Freij for sharing her personal story and for briefing us today on her important work preventing violent extremism and recruitment to ISIS.

Last year, our collective efforts resulted in ISIS losing its territory and its leader. Those victories in the battle against ISIS are a testament to the work of the global coalition to defeat ISIS, the Government of Iraq and other key partners on the ground. The coalition continues to pursue four main non-military lines of effort — counter-financing, counter-messaging, detention, repatriation and accountability for crimes

and abuses by foreign terrorist fighters and the stabilization of areas liberated from ISIS. It is critical that the coalition continue each of those lines of effort.

The Secretary-General's report confirms that ISIS affiliates still pose a serious threat to the world, from West Africa to South-East Asia. The scale of that threat is vast — a fact we wish to call attention to by identifying, sanctioning and targeting each ISIS affiliate. Recently, the United States nominated ISIS in the Greater Sahara and ISIS West Africa in the 1267 Sanctions Committee. We are grateful to the many countries that have co-sponsored those listings, most recently the Niger, and encourage other Member States to join us in countering those groups and their spread around the world. In addition, we ask all Council members to support those listings without further delay, as well as those we will be proposing soon for additional affiliates.

Even though ISIS and its so-called caliphate have been defeated on the battlefield, we must work together to ensure that detention facilities and camps do not become incubators in which ISIS can reconstitute. We share the Secretary-General's deep concerns about the thousands of foreign terrorist fighters and their families still being held in camps and detention facilities in Iraq and Syria.

ISIS foreign terrorist fighters should be repatriated and face prosecution and accountability for their crimes. And we must also rehabilitate and reintegrate their children to prevent the emergence of a new generation of fighters. Where it is appropriate to rehabilitate and reintegrate terrorist offenders back into society, it is essential to continue engaging with offenders after their release to avoid recidivism. That is why the United States intends to bring back every American from Syria and hold them legally accountable for their actions.

In Iraq, the world witnessed ISIS target thousands of innocent Iraqis in barbaric attacks. As the body dedicated to maintaining international peace and security, it is our moral responsibility to acknowledge the atrocities ISIS committed, document those atrocities, pursue justice and hold those responsible for them to account. That is why the United States is a strong supporter of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Before concluding, I would like to underscore that the guise of counter-terrorism operations can never be

used to justify the arbitrary incarceration of dissidents, journalists or members of religious and ethnic minority groups. Effective counter-terrorism must be rooted firmly in full and complete respect for human rights. In fact, they are mutually reinforcing. Individual rights must not be made subservient to collective security. As such, the Secretary-General and United Nations counter-terrorism bodies need to work more closely with High Commissioner Bachelet, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the broader community of non-governmental organizations to closely monitor, report on and address violations of human rights in the conduct of counter-terrorism activities, through relevant mechanisms.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the situation in Xinjiang, where more than 1 million Uyghurs and other Muslims have been detained in internment camps, under the guise of counter-terrorism. Confinement that is imposed on the basis of ethnicity and religion and, moreover, without any credible basis of individual wrongdoing is highly inconsistent with international law. Furthermore, the refoulement of Uyghur defectors under the false pretence of repatriating terrorists is unacceptable. In addition to violating individual rights, such actions can be counterproductive, leaving deep and lasting grievances.

Countering terrorism and violent extremism should never be used as a pretext to silence political views those in power find objectionable, violate religious freedom or repress minority groups. The United States is fully prepared to work with our partners to prevent violent extremism and to counter terrorism, while protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): First of all, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Coninx for their comprehensive and insightful briefings. I would like to say a special thanks to Ms. Mona Freij for her powerful and sobering statement. That serves to underline the importance of the Security Council being briefed by civil society representatives and is a clear reminder that effective counter-terrorism depends to a great extent on civil society. The role and influence of civil society in preventing individuals from falling prey to the false promises of terrorist groups cannot be overestimated.

We are concerned that the terrorist threat remains imminent despite the military defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria and the

death of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, as demonstrated by the very disturbing increase in ISIL-linked terrorist activities in West Africa, the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin. Countering terrorism and violent extremism needs to remain at the top of our international security agenda. I would like to briefly touch on three issues that seem very important to us: the need for international cooperation on, and a comprehensive approach to, counter-terrorism; the need for any reaction to terrorism to be in line with our standards and principles; and the importance of including a gender perspective in the Council's work on counter-terrorism.

On the first issue, international, regional and subregional cooperation remain crucial to successfully fighting terrorism. A transnational threat can be overcome only through joint, comprehensive international action. In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation for the broad scope of United Nations activities in the field of counter-terrorism, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/95), and we commend the women and men in the field who do the actual work, members of the armed forces and law enforcement agencies and others on the front line.

It is the Council's duty to ensure a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism, while balancing preventive and repressive measures, in order to achieve sustainable long-term success in the fight against terrorism. No fight can be won by military means alone, which definitely holds true for the fight against terrorism as well. Such a fight includes, among other things, finding a common approach to dealing with returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families in terms of prosecution and criminal justice, as well as deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration.

It is obvious that civil society plays a very important role in that regard, too. Furthermore, we need to counter terrorist financing, including through social media platforms or new methods, such as cryptocurrencies. We are particularly committed to supporting the work of the Financial Action Task Force as the international standard-setter on counter-financing.

Secondly, any reaction to terrorism must be in line with our standards and principles. Our values strengthen our credibility and enable us to defeat terrorist ideology. As soon as we are perceived as employing methods similar to those used by the very terrorists we claim to fight, we have lost the battle for

hearts and minds. Counter-terrorism measures must never serve as a pretext for human rights violations.

Yet there are multiple examples around the world of counter-terrorism measures that indiscriminately target ethnic or religious minorities, in violation of international human rights law. Furthermore, the exclusion of ethnic or religious minorities can cause marginalized persons to turn to violent extremism and fall into the hands of terrorist networks. It is therefore additionally counterproductive in trying to prevent terrorism.

That is why we must ensure that human rights, international humanitarian law and the rule of law are respected in the fight against terrorism, which will increase trust in State structures. In that context, I would like to underline the need for international mechanisms that ensure due diligence is done and, in that regard, commend the Ombudsperson to the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, Mr. Daniel Kipfer Fasciati, for his exemplary work, which is vital to the credibility, fairness and effectiveness of the sanctions regime.

Thirdly, I would like to stress the importance of including a gender perspective in the work of the Council, particularly in the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). The gender dimension plays an important role in countering the terrorist threat in a number of ways. Women are particularly affected by violent conflict and terrorism. However, as the report shows, women are not only victims of terrorism but are also taking on a more important operative role within ISIL. Therefore, female radicalization and women linked to, and operating for, terrorist groups should also become a priority item on our agenda.

Let me conclude by stressing once again that international cooperation based on adhering to international law and principles is key to our success. Going it alone and questioning our values means playing into terrorist hands.

Ms. DeShong (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I, too, would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Coninx for their briefings. We are especially grateful as well to civil society representative, Ms. Mona Freij, for her presence and briefing. We honour her work and the powerful words she shared, and we applaud her bravery and that of all the women who stand against the worst excesses of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh).

Today's meeting is undoubtedly an important opportunity for the Security Council to reaffirm its condemnation of all forms of violence, including terrorism. Indeed, despite all our efforts, terrorism remains a pressing challenge and one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. As noted in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2020/95), the issue of foreign terrorist fighters remains acute. An estimated half to two thirds of the more than 40,000 persons who joined the so-called caliphate are alive. That means that foreign terrorist fighters are on the move, returning home or relocating to other theatres of conflict. Given the current assessment of the financial reserves available to ISIL at \$100 to \$300 million, we encourage all Member States to fully adhere to their obligations under resolution 2462 (2019). It is incumbent upon us to ensure that those financing, planning, perpetrating and supporting terrorist acts are brought to justice.

At the same time, we wish to alert the Council to the fact that well-meaning but ill-fitting regulatory attempts to combat the financing of terrorism have had unintended effects on the banking system in small island locations. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, like many other countries around the world, has put mechanisms in place to combat those scourges. The establishment of our financial intelligence units is a critical tool in that area.

My delegation strongly supports the Accra initiative to address threats posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime in West Africa. The launch of a joint United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and INTERPOL project, to be implemented in 2020, to facilitate information exchange on foreign terrorist fighters in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East is one that we particularly hope will make a positive impact in the region. We also applaud the investigative efforts of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, including its role in collecting key documentary, digital, forensic and testimonial material in support of domestic proceedings to hold ISIL accountable for its crimes.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is of the firm view that addressing the multidimensional threats to international peace and security — in this instance those resulting from terrorism — requires gender-aware and gender-responsive analysis and action. Therefore, we really appreciated the briefing by Ms. Coninx in

that regard. Action and operational plans must include gender-just approaches that centre on the participation of women; promote survivor-centred remedial and reparatory actions against sexual and gender-based violence; and address the overall differential involvement in, and effects of, terrorism on women, men and children. In that connection, there is a need to design actions that are attentive to the other forms of difference and inequality that produce the condition of dispossession often exploited by terrorist organizations.

Global and regional security challenges have increased in recent years, becoming more complex, multidimensional and fluid. In response to the concerns of terrorism and in an effort to enhance and guarantee a safe and free region, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) counter-terrorism strategy was implemented in 2018. Formulated in keeping with and in support of, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, adopted by the Secretary-General in 2006, the CARICOM strategy incorporates prevention, deterrence, denial, disruption, defence and response. We welcome the common joint Caribbean Community-United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism high-level regional conference on counter-terrorism strategies and preventing violent extremism, to be held in Trinidad and Tobago in March, as mentioned by Under-Secretary-General Voronkov. We are really looking forward to that event in the Caribbean.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy represents the most comprehensive and effective decision taken by the international community to eliminate that dangerous threat. We welcome its seventh review, which will provide an additional opportunity to consider an improved and more effective translation of all its four pillars into concrete actions and measures. In our view, the issues being discussed here today can contribute to a meaningful outcome of the seventh review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

In closing, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is of the view that the fight against terrorism calls for hard work based on, among other things, collective action and intelligence-sharing to find and identify the perpetrators of the threat, pinpoint their locations and understand their strategies and goals.

Mr. Ben Lagha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to thank Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office

of Counter-Terrorism, and Ms. Michèle Coninx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, for their comprehensive briefings. I would like also to thank Ms. Mona Freij for sharing her own experience regarding the suffering of civilians, especially women, in Raqqa, from oppression under the yoke of the terrorist group Da'esh. That is a testament to the need for a participatory approach to counter-terrorism that includes all factions of society, especially women, given their role in building balanced societies capable of achieving peace and stability.

Despite the military defeat of Da'esh in Iraq and Syria and the killing of its leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, Da'esh continues to pose a threat to peace and security. That terrorist group has been able to cope with its territorial losses in Syria and Iraq. It is currently attempting to regroup and organize systematic attacks by taking advantage of the deteriorating security and political situations in certain regions. The current situation presents a number of serious challenges related to the fate of foreign terrorist fighters, estimated at around 40,000, according to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/95). Those fighters pose a threat, given that they are battle-hardened and weapon-trained. In the absence of the necessary measures to ensure the judicial follow up, rehabilitation and reintegration of those returnee fighters, they could join local terrorist groups or sleeper cells, thereby becoming vectors of terrorist and violent ideologies. They represent a direct threat to their countries of origin and neighbouring countries.

Da'esh fighters seek to relocate to other conflict zones in the world, which represent breeding grounds for Da'esh offshoots and terrorist groups in general. That would make these conflicts more severe, prolonged, complex and bloody. In that context, Tunisia follows with grave concern the latest reports on the relocation of numerous terrorist fighters from Syria to Libya, which will pose an additional threat to the security not only of Libya but also of neighbouring countries and the Sahel region.

Tunisia welcomes the progress made by the United Nations in combating terrorist threats. We call for continued efforts until Da'esh and other terrorist groups are completely eliminated, especially through the implementation of international legal instruments and relevant resolutions. My country welcomes the adoption by the Council last year of resolution 2462 (2019), on combating the financing of terrorism, as well as resolution 2482 (2019), on the links between

terrorism and transnational organized crime. In that regard, I would like to make the following points.

First, there is a need to intensify bilateral and multilateral cooperation on information-sharing, border security and the protection of civil aviation in order to monitor and prevent the relocation of foreign terrorist fighters to conflict zones or other countries. I underscore the need to build the capacities of States and provide them with the resources necessary to protect soft targets, such as public spaces, archaeological and tourist sites, places of worship and sporting and cultural events, which constitute easy targets for terrorist groups, especially lone-wolf attackers.

Secondly, my country emphasizes the fact that the phenomenon of terrorism is closely linked to deteriorating political and security situations across the world, especially in the Middle East and Africa. Conflicts, intra-State wars and the availability of weapons contribute to an environment conducive to violence and extremist and criminal groups. Tunisia stresses the need for the Council to play an active and vital role by using all the tools provided to it by the Charter of the United Nations to resolve such conflicts and combat the trafficking of weapons.

Thirdly, Tunisia stresses that combating terrorism will not be effective without a comprehensive and participatory approach that is not limited to security solutions but addresses the root causes of terrorism, such as poverty, marginalization and exclusion, which push vulnerable groups, especially young people, towards radicalization. Achieving sustainable development and investing in the stability and prosperity of people are our first line of defence against conflicts, violent and extremist rhetoric.

Fourthly, the international community must promote accountability mechanisms to hold to account those who participate in, encourage, finance or support terrorist acts in order to achieve fair accountability, prevent impunity and restore the dignity of the victims of terrorism. Tunisia welcomes the adoption of resolution 2490 (2019) in September 2019, renewing for one year the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). My country looks forward to continued partnership between the Iraqi authorities and the Investigative Team in the area of preserving, storing and maintaining evidence of the horrific terrorist crimes committed by

those terrorist groups, while fully respecting Iraq's sovereignty and jurisdiction over crimes committed on its territory. Tunisia also welcomes the initiative to organize the first meeting of its kind for victims of terrorism, to be held at United Nations Headquarters in June, which will shed light on the rights of the victims and their active role in combating terrorist rhetoric.

Fifthly, Tunisia expresses its concern over the increased use of communications technology, in particular social media, to spread terrorist narratives and attract and recruit young people. We welcome the open meeting held by the Counter-Terrorism Committee last month, which focused on various mechanisms and lessons learned in combating the narrative of terrorism, while taking into account freedom of expression and human rights.

In conclusion, my country underscores the need for combating terrorism to be based on respecting international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We must include all actors, especially civil society, women, young people, the victims of terrorism and the private sector, as key partners in addressing the root causes of terrorism, given their pivotal role in building balanced and cohesive societies that would be the best defence against terrorism.

Mr. Van Shalkwyk (South Africa): Let me begin by thanking Mr. Voronkov and Ms. Coninx for their briefings, which we very much appreciated. We are also very grateful to the participant from civil society, Ms. Mona Freij, for her courageous briefing to the Security Council today. Her briefing serves to remind us of the horrors perpetrated by Da'esh, as well as the resilience of the human spirit in surviving and overcoming such devastating experiences.

On the subject of resilience, we note with concern the findings of latest strategic-level report (S/2020/95) of the Secretary-General on the resilience of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its toxic ideology, despite seemingly devastating setbacks. It is clear that — despite having lost its territorial presence in its self-declared caliphate in the Middle East and having suffered the death of its leader and other senior figures — ISIL nevertheless continues to be resilient, remaining a threat to international peace and security, which merits the Security Council's attention.

That demonstrates the group's highly adaptive and resourceful nature and the dogged commitment of some of its followers to its ideology and agenda, which will

require our equal determination to effectively counter their actions and narrative. In doing so we must ensure that there is accountability for the group's barbaric crimes. We commend the continued efforts of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant on the significant strides that it is making in that challenging task.

We are of course particularly alarmed by the report's findings concerning our continent. The report is in line with our own assessment, which suggests that ISIL has begun to expand its presence on the African continent in the face of pressure in the Middle East and elsewhere. Those efforts have seen the group attempt to exploit the continent's security challenges to perpetuate its existence and agenda via regional affiliates that utilize Africa as an operational base and a target for attacks.

Allow me to reiterate South Africa's steadfast commitment to standing together with our fellow African brothers and sisters in the fight against terrorism on the continent so that its terrible scourge is not allowed to erode the hard-won progress that we have collectively made in prioritizing the continent's development.

As previously stated, South Africa remains committed to addressing terrorism holistically. That is to say that we believe that, in order to effectively counter the scourge of terrorism, we must give the same weight to addressing the conditions and factors that give rise to and sustain it that we give to addressing its security dimensions. It is also critical that counter-terrorism measures be implemented in full compliance with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and that States avoid unilateral counter-terrorism measures, which often result in unintended casualties, stoking further resentments and a continued cycle of violence.

The international nature of the terrorist threat, which knows no boundaries, demands a multilateral response, which is best coordinated by the United Nations. In that regard, we value the work of the United Nations counter-terrorism bodies in assisting Member States to fight the scourge of terrorism, including through capacity-building measures such as the development of handbooks on children affected by the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, as well as the guidelines on mutual legal assistance developed in collaboration with

the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Association of Prosecutors.

South Africa also welcomes efforts to improve cooperation with regional bodies, including the African Union, to improve our joint capacity to counter terrorism. In that regard, we commend the Secretary-General's international regional conferences, including the African Regional High-level Conference on Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, which was held in Nairobi in 2019. The outcomes of that meeting and other regional conferences elsewhere in the world will complement the counter-terrorism week to be held at the United Nations in June.

Domestically, South Africa remains committed to improving its counter-terrorism capacity in line with all United Nations recommendations and actively cooperates with its region on those matters. We were pleased to host in December 2019, in collaboration with the Office of Counter-Terrorism, a joint subregional dialogue for select member jurisdictions of the Eastern and Southern Africa Money-Laundering Group on improving capacity to counter the financing of terrorism in the subregion.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating that South Africa will continue to remain a committed and responsible partner in all United Nations counter-terrorism bodies, underpinned by the principles that have been highlighted.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): Before delivering my statement, I would like to express my full support for, and solidarity with, the Permanent Mission of Tunisia and our dear colleague Ambassador Moncef Baati.

Let me start by joining my colleagues in thanking today's briefers. I also would like to express Estonia's support for the outstanding work that they are all doing. I am especially glad that we had a chance to hear from the civil society representative about the situation and challenges on the ground. I thank all our briefers for their collaboration.

Estonia strongly condemns all forms of terrorism and considers it a significant threat to international peace and security. I fully share the assessment made by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2020/95) and agree that, despite the progress made in fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the transnational threat of terrorism remains acute and ISIL

and its affiliates remain at the centre of it. We share the concern raised in the report concerning the Sahel region, which has experienced a devastating surge in terrorist attacks on civilians and military targets in recent months.

As we have learned from the past and as the Secretary General's report points out, terrorists are quick to adapt to changing situations and exploit vulnerabilities. Therefore, we must continue our efforts to tackle the threat, and the United Nations system has a central role to play in that regard. I would like to focus on three elements that Estonia considers vital in the fight against terrorism: the priority of cooperation, the value of a two-sided approach and the importance of accountability and justice.

The importance of cooperation cannot be stressed enough. Terrorism is a global phenomenon, and no State can address it alone. The experiences of the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other regional organizations in counter-terrorism cooperation confirm that notion. Member States bear the primary responsibility to stand up to terrorism. However, at the same time, Estonia encourages and supports the engagement of other stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society and academic and religious organizations.

Secondly, in countering terrorism Estonia supports a two-sided approach. Security operations must go hand in hand with addressing the root causes of radicalization and terrorism. One without the other is not enough and will not reduce threats and instability. Although Estonia has been untouched by terrorism directly, we know that no State is immune to the threat. We take seriously our responsibility to stand side by side with the global community in the fight against ISIL and its affiliates. Estonia contributes both in terms of sharing the responsibility to take military action and contributing in the humanitarian area.

Currently, Estonia contributes to counter-terrorism operations in different regions, and our troops are currently stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Mali. We also do our share to address the root causes of instability by reducing poverty and the marginalization of certain groups and promoting gender equality. For example, our aid activities are focusing on Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. We are teaching them information technology skills and entrepreneurship and offering psychological support.

Thirdly, restoring justice and ensuring accountability remain an essential part of countering terrorism. It is our duty to deny impunity for terrorists. Combating impunity for the most serious crimes under international law enables reconciliation in society and helps to prevent the resurgence of terrorism. At the same time, accountability measures must comply with international law and fair trial standards, including by ensuring the highest standards of witness and victim protection.

Member States operating in conflict and post-conflict environments often face significant challenges in obtaining evidence to bring ISIL to justice. In that light, Estonia fully supports the establishment and the work of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). We owe it to the victims to ensure that crimes will not go unpunished. We further welcome progress made by UNITAD to collect, preserve and store evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that all measures against terrorism must be taken in compliance with international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law. Let me also reiterate the fundamental role of the United Nations, including the role of the Security Council, in the fight against terrorism. Estonia will continue to engage resolutely in multilateral efforts to combat that global threat.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Under-Secretary-General Voronkov and Executive Director Coninx for their briefings. We welcome the tenth report (S/2020/95) 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. We also listened carefully to the statement by civil society representative Mona Freij.

The international counter-terrorism situation remains grim at present, with extremism and terrorism closely intertwined. Terrorist attacks in many parts of the world have wrought havoc on the countries involved. As stated in the Secretary-General's report, the transnational threat posed by terrorism remains

grave. Despite setbacks, ISIL is rapidly reorganizing in the form of covert networks and continues to attack official personnel and facilities in remote areas of Iraq. The resettlement of foreign terrorist fighters, the links between terrorist organizations and transnational organized crime and the plethora of underground channels for terrorist financing pose severe challenges to countries.

Faced with that reality, the international community must remain vigilant against a resurgence of global terrorism, while fostering a common awareness of humankind's shared future and strengthening practical cooperation in our joint efforts to address the threat of terrorism.

First, it is imperative to continue to leverage the central coordinating role of the United Nations and the Security Council in the fight against terrorism, which must adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, respect the sovereignty of the countries concerned and acknowledge the primary responsibility of Member States in counter-terrorism efforts. We should adhere to unified standards and comprehensively implement the relevant Council resolutions and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Secondly, we must strive to eliminate the root causes of terrorism. The international community should promote the peaceful resolution of hotspot issues by political means, while assisting Member States in alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable development. We must encourage dialogue among civilizations and religions on an equal footing, strengthen education for young people, increase employment opportunities, promote social inclusion and remove the influence of extremist ideologies. We should provide assistance to developing countries and help Member States to build their counter-terrorism and deradicalization capacities.

Thirdly, we should strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation in the light of current and emerging trends and characteristics of international terrorism. We must focus on supporting Member States in addressing prominent issues, such as terrorists' abuse of the Internet and information and communications technologies, the diversification of channels of terrorist financing and collusion between terrorist groups and organized criminal networks.

The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, and other mechanisms should strictly follow the relevant resolutions and rules of procedure, cooperate closely and work in synergy.

On the more prominent issue of foreign terrorist fighters, China believes that the relevant departments of the Secretariat should strengthen the collection of information and the examination of each situation in order to lay the groundwork for Member States to take the next steps. In that process, it is imperative to strengthen consultations with the countries concerned and respect their judicial sovereignty. Priority should be given to the principle of territoriality. Each case should be dealt with according to law; imposed solutions must be avoided.

China has been deeply engaged in counter-terrorism cooperation within the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, among others, and has cooperated effectively with many Member States in the areas of counter-terrorism intelligence-sharing and crackdowns on terrorist financing, transnational organized crime and cyberterrorism.

Through the China-United Nations Peace and Development Fund, China has supported UNOCT in its various projects, including the security of major sporting events and capacity-building for African counter-terrorism coordination efforts. China will actively participate in and contribute to a series of regional conferences on counter-terrorism led by UNOCT, including the seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and activities during the high-level week on counter-terrorism.

China received CTED during its visit to China in late October, which facilitated understanding and policy dialogue between the two parties and strengthened counter-terrorism cooperation between China and United Nations agencies. China is ready to work with other countries to address the threat of terrorism and jointly safeguard world peace and stability.

At the present time, the United States has levelled unwarranted accusations against China. Such attacks deviate from the subject of this meeting and are completely baseless. They also constitute unwanted interference in China's internal affairs and a brazen attempt to provoke confrontation. China expresses its firm opposition to, and categorical rejection of, such remarks.

The issues that Xinjiang is facing do not involve ethnic groups, religion or human rights, but rather counter-terrorism and deradicalization. For some time, China's Xinjiang region has suffered frequent terrorist attacks that have seriously jeopardized the lives and property of all ethnic communities and resulted in grave violations of human dignity. In response, China has taken determined legal measures to combat terrorism and extremism, thereby eliminating — to the extent possible — all conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and extremism. Those measures have produced good results and have effectively curbed the spread of rampant terrorist activities and served to safeguard citizens' basic rights, including their right to life and development.

The Chinese Government has issued white papers on Xinjiang that comprehensively outline relevant policies and measures. The fight against terrorism and extremism in Xinjiang constitutes a crucial part of global counter-terrorism efforts. The useful exploration of preventive counter-terrorism in Xinjiang represents an important contribution to combating that scourge at the international level. At present, the situation in Xinjiang is largely stable and the local economy continues to grow. People of all ethnic groups live in harmony and the region has been free of terrorist attacks for more than three years.

The Security Council is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security — it is not and should not become a venue for a certain country to stage its political shows. The United States, in the name of Xinjiang, has hypocritically portrayed itself as a human rights defender while engaging in unilateralism and violating international law and the norms governing international relations, thereby plunging the world into chaos. That is what the United States has done. Regime change, interference in the internal affairs of other countries and triggering humanitarian crises — that is what the United States has done. The abuse of force in international relations and inciting war in the Middle East, where Muslim countries and

people have suffered — that is what the United States has done. Serious human rights issues, lack of social cohesion, rampant racial discrimination have all arisen in the United States.

We agree that counter-terrorism must not be pursued at the expense of human rights. We urge the United States to heed the demand of United Nations human rights mechanisms to close its prisons in Guantanamo and stop its actions. Some time ago, China invited close to 1,000 people from more than 70 delegations of foreign diplomats, officials and international organizations and press to visit Xinjiang. After seeing the situation on the ground, they all acknowledged and commended the Chinese Government's efforts to combat and prevent terrorism, in accordance with the law.

Last October, more than 60 Member States expressed their support for China's position on Xinjiang in their statements in the General Assembly's Third Committee. China urges the United States to carefully listen to the international community's voice of justice, respect facts and give up bigotry and double standards. It must stop interfering in China's internal affairs, stop undermining the unity of the Council, stop politicizing counter-terrorism issues and stop seeking confrontation at the United Nations.

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Belgium for the choice of this topic at a time when the populations of several countries of the Sahel, including the Niger, are facing a surge in extremely lethal terrorist acts. I would also like to thank Mr. Voronkov and Ms. Coninx for their briefings

As the Secretary-General clearly underlines in his report (S/2020/95), the destruction of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant did not put an end to the spread of barbarity by its combatants, let alone diminish their ambition to conquer and possess territory. We therefore do not have the right to give them yet another chance to reconstitute their sanctuary in another part of the world.

In his briefing to the Council on 8 January (see S/PV.8698), Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, drew our attention to the intensification in recent months of terrorist attacks of unprecedented scope in the Sahel region, with the threat progressing from the north of Mali towards the so-called three-border zone countries — Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger — and potentially spreading to coastal countries. In the space

of three years, he told us, the number of victims of terrorist attacks in those three countries had risen five-fold, rising from approximately 770 in 2016 to over 4,000 reported deaths in 2019.

One month ago, my country experienced three deadly attacks that claimed the lives of 179 Nigerian soldiers. The Islamic State's West African Province claimed responsibility for the attack on the military camp of Inates, on the Malian border, on 11 December, killing 71 soldiers; the ambush of 25 December, against a convoy of soldiers escorting teams in charge of the electoral registration, killing 14 people; and the attack against the military camp of Chinagodar, also on the Malian border, on 9 January, killing 89 soldiers. The recurring terrorist attacks in the subregion have led to the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, thereby exacerbating the already worrying food insecurity in the region and accelerating the closure of thousands of schools and health centres.

It is evident that the Sahel has become an ideal zone for the most dangerous terrorist groups, which collaborate with other transnational criminal organizations operating in the region, such as drug, arms and human traffickers, to do their dirty work. As a result, the Governments of those countries are making enormous efforts to protect their populations and the integrity of their territories. For example, the Government of the Niger allocates more than 25 per cent of its national budget to that end, to the detriment of basic social services, such as health and education.

To be even more effective against this transnational enemy, those countries have pooled their forces through the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and the Multinational Joint Task Force, which have been effective, particularly in the Lake Chad basin, where they triumphed over the Boko Haram combatants, now entrenched in the Sambisa forest. I thank all the friendly countries and organizations that support us in this struggle by training and/or equipping our soldiers, as well as through military operations on the ground.

Despite the resolve of our Governments and the bravery of our soldiers, our countries clearly do not have the necessary or appropriate means to defeat this transnational enemy. That is the reason for the escalating threat to which I referred earlier. That is why — in the name of collective security and before it is too late — I call for more active and effective

international solidarity to eradicate all security threats in the Sahel and other affected parts of Africa, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

In conclusion, we believe that such international solidarity would be embodied by an early resolution to the Libyan conflict; the financing of the G-5 Sahel; broad membership of the international Coalition for the Sahel, created on 10 January in Pau, France; the strengthening of the capacity and mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to enable it to be more on the offensive and lend a hand in the event of an attack on a G-5 Sahel country by terrorists; the promotion of information-sharing between MINUSMA and the G-5 Sahel on the presence and movement of terrorist groups; substantive support for the Governments of the affected countries in the implementation of their development and good governance programmes — because, as we fight the terrorists militarily, we will also have to simultaneously combat the sources of its financing and address the factors that promote the emergence of its ideology, such as ignorance and precariousness; and the effective implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

Mr. Michon (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to warmly thank our briefers for their briefings on the threat posed by Da'esh. I would also like to salute the courage of Ms. Freij, who spurs us to pursue our efforts to eliminate the terrorist threat, particularly Da'esh.

The military defeats suffered by Da'esh show that the collective efforts in the fight against terrorism have made it lose its territorial foothold. But it is clear that this struggle will bear fruit only if we act everywhere and at all levels, because the Da'esh threat has not been eradicated. The group is still present underground in the Levant and has spread through its franchises all over the world. In that connection, I would like to stress four priorities that must guide our efforts to combat the influence of this terror organization.

First, the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/95) notes the ongoing threat, particularly in Syria and Iraq, where Da'esh has been beaten but not completely defeated. The collective priority for the region must therefore be to continue the efforts of the Global Coalition against Da'esh in the Levant to prevent the resurgence of the terrorist group. In that context, France wishes to remain militarily engaged in Iraq, at the

request of the Baghdad authorities and in full respect for its sovereignty.

The fight for security, however, will not be enough so long as terrorist ideology continues to recruit adherents. It is therefore critical to prevent terrorist radicalization. That will require the commitment of all stakeholders, including on the Internet, which can be used to spread terrorist propaganda and connect terrorist groups and those who wish to join them. France is at the forefront in that fight. We are proud to have launched the Christchurch Appeal, along with New Zealand, which has already brought together about 50 countries, organizations and major Internet companies. France also supports the European Union's draft legislation requiring Internet companies to remove terrorist content within one hour. Without undermining our commitment to the freedom of expression, the aim is not to let the Internet become a sanctuary for, or tool used by, terrorist groups.

While prevention is necessary, we must also adapt our legislation and mechanisms in order to prosecute and provide support for those lured by the false promises of terrorist groups. That is a complex undertaking, given the diverse profiles of the men and women concerned. For several years now, France has taken several measures to address such situations and attaches particular importance to the care and monitoring of minors who have returned or been repatriated from Syria and Iraq.

Our second priority is to combat terrorist financing. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/95) mentions, terrorist groups, even if cut off from their territorial base, continue to prosper, thanks to resources derived from ordinary crimes, organized fraud, kidnapping, extortion and trafficking in weapons, drugs and art, to name but a few examples. They need money to conduct their activities, recruit new candidates and spread their hate speech. Efforts made over the past 20 years to dry up those resources must continue, in line with resolution 2462 (2019).

Our third priority is to work tirelessly to ensure that the reprehensible crimes committed by Da'esh do not go unpunished. Too many civilians, including women and children, have been the victims of crimes that, in addition to qualifying as acts of terrorism, might constitute, among other things, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

We supported the establishment of 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), and the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. That is the first step in the fight against impunity. We will continue to support those efforts so that victims can receive reparations.

Lastly, our fourth priority is to ensure that the fight against terrorism is conducted with full respect for human rights law and international humanitarian law. That fight must not be used as a pretext for discrimination against any religious group. Respect for human rights, the freedoms of expression, religion and belief, and the rule of law, as well as inclusion and social cohesion, are the *sine qua non* of any strategy to prevent and combat terrorism. The efforts of actors, including non-State actors, constitute another condition for success in that fight. I have already mentioned actors such as companies, including Internet companies, but I would also like to recall the importance of civil society actors, whose contribution to countering hate speech and strengthening the resilience of societies is essential.

In conclusion, I once again welcome Ms. Freij to our discussion today and thank her for her briefing on today's topic. France will remain committed to combating terrorism, on all fronts, in order to eradicate the threat.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): First of all, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Assistant Secretary-General Coninx and civil society representative Mona Freij for their briefings.

We are pleased to observe the fruitful collaboration between the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and encourage them to continue on that path. On that note, we note the important work that they have conducted to date and look forward to sharing Indonesia's experience and lessons learned in preventing and countering terrorism when we host both entities, as well as the Coordinator of the Monitoring Team, later this month in Jakarta.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Monitoring Team, CTED, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other United Nations entities for the

comprehensive report before us (S/2020/95). My delegation takes note of various salient points in the report, including the point that, despite the decrease in the overall level of violence related to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the group continues to pose a serious threat through its affiliates and the attacks it has inspired. Of equal concern is the remaining large number of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). With that in mind, let me make three brief points.

The first relates to the threat of terrorism by ISIL affiliates. Far from Iraq and Syria, ISIL affiliates continue to threaten other parts of the globe. The report clearly demonstrates that ISIL affiliates have become even more active in West and Central Africa, the Greater Sahara area, Central Asia and South-East Asia. We know that it is a threat that evolves quickly and takes on different forms. Therefore, we must ensure that our preventive measures and responses evolve equally quickly and with greater dynamism.

Secondly, we note the continuing humanitarian and security challenges posed by FTFs. Issues such as how to deal with the relocation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs and their accompanying family members present significant challenges for Member States. In that regard, with a view to discussing existing practices and challenges in South-East Asia, Indonesia, together with CTED, co-organized a regional meeting in Jakarta last week on the theme “Comprehensive and tailored strategies for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of persons allegedly associated with terrorist groups”. We believe that further efforts need to be made to strengthen the coherence, coordination and effectiveness of prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies among Member States, with the support of the relevant United Nations agencies.

That leads to my last point — preventing recidivism. As mentioned in the report, the threat posed by returnees, terrorist perpetrators, frustrated travellers and radicalized prisoners is also of continued concern. Despite the fact that some of them are still believed to be dangerous according to records, they are expected to be released soon. We cannot afford to take risks. We cannot undertake deradicalization efforts that only lead back to prison. In that connection, Indonesia advocates a comprehensive approach.

To that end, with the support of the Group of Friends of Preventing Violent Extremism, Indonesia,

together with Belgium and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, co-hosted an Arria Formula meeting in November 2019 on the challenges of radicalization in prisons in order to discuss strategies, best practices and persistent challenges in managing incarcerated terrorists and other violent extremist prisoners.

In conclusion, while continuing with law enforcement, Indonesia believes that we should also invest in soft measures to counter terrorist narratives and steer people away from extremism. We need to promote and facilitate the spread of messages of peace, moderation and tolerance, as the best approach to confronting hatred and prevent incitement. We must provide messages that at the same time turn back negativity and amplify credible positivity.

Mr. Bencosme Castaños (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and Ms. Coninx, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, for their briefings on the tenth report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/95). We also thank Ms. Freij for her moving testimony.

While there has been significant progress in the fight against terrorism, in particular the loss of territorial control previously held by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) in the Syrian Arab Republic and the impact on its leadership from various operations, we remain extremely concerned about the ability of those groups to mutate into new modalities for inflicting pain and fear, in their zeal to demonstrate their relevance through inspired attacks and regional affiliates, becoming a covert network with aspirations of carrying out large-scale attacks.

We continue to pay special attention to the threat posed by the number of foreign terrorist fighters at the disposal of terrorist groups, which take advantage of porous borders to carry out insurgent attacks on officials, infrastructure and checkpoints. Such attacks have claimed the lives of hundreds of soldiers and innocent civilians. Weapons and funding continue to be provided to those groups, which seek to consolidate their actions and cooperate with transnational organized crime networks.

The Dominican Republic again strongly condemns all terrorist acts as unjustifiable, barbaric and cowardly. We therefore extend our sincere condolences to the families and the countries affected by the attacks. We

have recently noted with astonishment the increase in the number and scale of attacks perpetrated against members of the security and defence forces of Mali, the Niger and Burkina Faso.

As we have previously stated in the Council, we agree on the need to urgently and holistically address, on the basis of experience and best practices and with greater collaboration among Member States, the issues of protection, repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of the most vulnerable, in particular women and children with ties to those terrorist groups, who are stranded in conflict zones, crowded camps and detention centres.

In that regard, we are concerned about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the camps and detention centres, such as in Al-Hol camp in Syria, whose population, which is more than 70 per cent women and children, is exposed to deplorable conditions and a lack not only of basic food, water, medical care and education services but also of adequate support programmes to counter the risk of exploitation and radicalization.

We acknowledge the challenges Member States face in conducting comprehensive risk assessments, minimizing stigmatization and determining possible criminal responsibility, while safeguarding and adhering to international law, including international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

Consequently, we agree on the importance, in implementing repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, of continuing to improve the design of policies that are focused on the needs of the individual, as well as evidence-based, gender-sensitive and age-sensitive, with particular emphasis on the condition of victims, which should take precedence in the treatment of children, as stipulated in the Madrid Guiding Principles and other protocols, .

Finally, we commend the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Office on Drugs and Crime and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate for their work with Member States to strengthen their counter-terrorism policies and measures, as well as the processes for the repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and their dependants, in order to reverse the cycle of violence and victimization that makes it impossible for societies to function effectively and to prevent the spread of violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I thank Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov and Ms. Michèle Coninsx for their briefings, as well as Ms. Mona Freij for courageously sharing her experience. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the tenth report (S/2020/95) 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.

We are following with great concern the reports of the ongoing transformation of ISIL into a covert global network, continuing to launch attacks and seek resurgence. ISIL's regional affiliates have continued their strategy to exploit conflict situations and local grievances and expand their network in other parts of the world. A number of the remaining foreign terrorist fighters have relocated to other regions or have returned to their home countries, thus posing challenges for rehabilitation and reintegration and the risk of radicalization.

The report also notes the alarming trend of the growing nexus between terrorism and organized crime, as well as the risk of women being recruited to plan and carry out attacks. That reality requires all Member States to remain vigilant and united. We join the call for greater cooperation among States and other stakeholders in order to strengthen our collective efforts and be innovative in our actions. In that regard, my delegation would like to make three points.

First, we underscore the paramount need to strengthen international cooperation to address the threat posed by terrorism. Cooperation among the relevant authorities is crucial for the collection, analysis and sharing of intelligence about terrorists' imminent attacks, networks, recruitment, training and financing, as well as evidence for their prosecution. Enhancing national capacities and building national and regional institutional mechanisms to counter the threat of terrorism are equally important.

We welcome the capacity-building efforts of the Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), including CTED's recent updates to the technical guide for the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions, which are very useful to Member States. We support the central role of the United Nations system in coordinating the global fight against terrorism. We commend the increased

efforts to strengthen the coherence, coordination and effectiveness of United Nations counter-terrorism work, in particular the cooperation between UNOCT and CTED.

It should be noted that in undertaking all measures to address the threats of terrorism, Member States and all relevant stakeholders should uphold the Charter of the United Nations and ensure full compliance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

Secondly, we have consistently maintained that one of the most effective ways of countering the threat of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism is to address the root causes of terrorism, including unresolved conflict, poverty, inequality and injustice. The Security Council should scale up its efforts and pay greater attention to addressing unresolved conflicts. Regional organizations should play an instrumental role in settling disputes and strengthening a region's resilience in the face of terrorism.

Thirdly, we note with concern the presence of ISIL terrorist groups in Asia, including the travel of foreign terrorist fighters in South-East Asia. At the regional level, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has spared no effort to counter the threat of terrorism, including by effectively implementing the its Convention on Counter-Terrorism and its Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism. Viet Nam maintains its firm position to reject and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We are committed to cooperating with Member States and relevant stakeholders in countering the scourge of terrorism and contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Voronkov and Ms. Coninx for their detailed analysis of the situation regarding the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We express our support for the activities of the entities they head and the plans and initiatives being developed in the area of counter-terrorism. We also thank Ms. Mona Freij for her statement.

We concur with the Secretary-General's assessment of the threat posed by the ISIL. The members of that terrorist organization maintain their footholds in Syria and Iraq, have transformed into an extensive underground network there and continue to build capacity in other regions, specifically in Afghanistan,

West Africa and the Lake Chad basin. They are also trying to infiltrate and establish a presence in the Asia-Pacific region. ISIL-Khorasan remains a key factor in the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. ISIL activity in that country is fuelled by, inter alia, foreign terrorist fighters with combat experience in Syria and Iraq. We see in the group's continued presence in the country the threat of terrorist activities spilling over into central Asian States. Our priority is the application of the Security Council's counter-terrorism sanctions regime to individuals and organizations that are a part of or directly linked to the Afghan branch of ISIL.

ISIL terrorist activity in Libya poses a threat. The situation is further compounded by the fact fighters are being redeployed to that area from Idlib province in Syria. Absent a normalization of the situation in that country, stabilization of the security situation in the region is virtually impossible. We are already enduring the fallout of the collapse of statehood in Libya in West Africa and the Sahel-Sahara region.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2020/95) flags the issue of the Al-Hol camp in Syria and the plight of those detained there. We have repeatedly stated, and are ready to reiterate, that there is and can be no order wherever Syrian sovereignty is violated. Without cooperation with the legitimate authorities, there is no way to solve counter-terrorism, humanitarian and human rights issues. We are confident that the efforts of the international community must be aimed at preventing the resurgence of ISIL and the emergence of a new driving force for the terrorist internationale. In that regard, we support the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, inter alia, to counter terrorist and extremist propaganda and combat the financing of terrorism.

Unfortunately, however, we continue to observe attempts to pander to terrorists and to use them for geopolitical purposes. We believe that this approach is both reckless and pernicious. Such games entail disastrous consequences in specific countries and persistent violations of freedoms and human rights. For some reason, it is only after tragedy strikes and casualties climb into the thousands that people take note of and consider the situation. At yesterday's Security Council meeting (see S/PV.8715), we addressed in detail the reasons for the recent resurgence of terrorist activities by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. We presented tried and true figures and facts, compiled by the Russian

military personnel present in Syria. The threats that have arisen will indubitably be eradicated.

To date, the international community faces another pressing issue, namely, what is to be done with foreign terrorist fighters and their families. We are convinced that justice for terrorists must be carried out in national jurisdictions, based on the principles of the inevitability of punishment and proportionality vis-à-vis the crime committed. International cooperation in that area must be rooted in full compliance with the relevant provisions of universal counter-terrorism conventions, including the principle of extradite or prosecute.

Russia has consistently opposed granting various groups the right to protect areas where fighters are being held, and especially to decide their fate. Unfortunately, some countries prefer to distance themselves from resolving the issue of bringing to justice their own citizens who fought in the ranks of terrorists in Syria and Iraq. Patronage and connivance, against the backdrop of impunity, fuel the unacceptable increase in terrorist activity, as we are seeing today in Idlib. Family members of foreign terrorist fighters who are illegally present in Syria and Iraq and who are not suspected of involvement in terrorist activities must be expeditiously repatriated to their countries of origin and citizenship. Terrorists need to be duly punished.

We believe that the report on the threat of ISIL should not fail to focus on the question of manpower, material, financial and weapon support for terrorism. The document under discussion today mentions the issue of supplying military equipment to terrorist organizations only in passing. Meanwhile, terrorist groups in the Middle East and Africa continue to receive weapons from external sponsors. We call on all responsible States to immediately stop all illegal arms transfers and to not play into the hands of radical elements under the pretext of facilitating myriad incarnations of the so-called moderate opposition.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me, as always, thank our briefers — Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, Executive Director Coninx and Ms. Freij — for their briefings today. I would also like to thank the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities for

its very strong contribution to the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/95).

Let me say that we agree with the assessments set out in the report. Al-Qaida remains a destabilizing influence, and while Da'esh has lost territory, it remains a considerable threat, both militarily and politically. With the appointment of the successor to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi and the emergence of strong affiliates and supporters from West Africa to South-East Asia, their core narrative or brand continues. The United Kingdom will continue to work with coalition partners to bring an end to Da'esh once and for all.

The United Kingdom has been clear that individuals who have fought for or supported Da'esh must face justice and accountability in the most appropriate jurisdiction, which is often in the region where crimes took place. We continue to pursue all available avenues with international partners and reaffirm the need to implement resolution 2396 (2017). In that regard, we welcome the unanimous renewal in September of the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) and very much support its work on supporting victims and collecting critical evidence to hold Da'esh accountable for its horrific crimes.

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

As we adopt our tools, so do the terrorists. We were therefore pleased that recent resolutions reflect new methods of terrorist financing and links of criminality, and welcome the increased focus on the protection of principled humanitarian action. We encourage the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to continue developing their work on that aspect.

The Secretary-General's report illustrates the complex and multiple roles of women and the need to ensure gendered analyses and responses. We heard today the brave testimony of Ms. Freij and the invaluable contributions of women on the front lines. Ms. Freij reminded us not only of the importance of ensuring that there is a security response to terrorism, but also that there is a need to build societies' resilience,

including through civil society. It is important to win over hearts and minds, and failure risks reversion to terrorism in the future. I know that Under-Secretary-General Voronkov very strongly supports the role of civil society in tackling terrorism.

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

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

The Secretary-General's report rightly highlights the importance of respect for human rights in effective counter-terrorism policies. Indeed, the council has repeatedly stressed the importance of human rights in counter-terrorism and determined early on through policy guidance in 2006 that human rights is an important component of CTED's work.

We also commend United Nations entities for their many initiatives in ensuring that measures to prevent violent extremism integrate human rights and gender as cross-cutting issues. We continue in that context to have strong concerns with regard to the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including the extrajudicial detention of more than 1 million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in so-called political re-education camps, systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam, and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities, much of which has been revealed in the Chinese Government's own papers.

We recognize, of course, that China may have terrorism concerns, but it is our view that its actions are disproportionate and indiscriminate and, moreover, that they will be counterproductive in the long-term because they risk exacerbating ethnic tensions and creating conditions that lead to radicalization and terrorism. I note that Under-Secretary-General Voronkov visited China and went to Xinjiang, although he did not have access to the camps, and that such a visit was not on CTED's agenda. We therefore encourage China to agree an early date for a visit by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Bachelet and to guarantee her free and unfettered access to Xinjiang.

I would just say that I was a little surprised to hear my Chinese colleague say that the Security Council was not an appropriate forum for the discussion of Xinjiang. At the Security Council meeting on 25 September 2019, under the Russian presidency, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi proactively raised the situation in Xinjiang and described China's actions as both "preventive counter-terrorism" and "implementing the United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism" (*S/PV.8626, p.13*). He spoke third that day, after the representatives of Kuwait and Belgium, neither of whom had raised Xinjiang in their interventions. It was therefore China's choice to place the issue on our table here.

I do not wish to revisit yesterday's meeting (see *S/PV.8715*). That would take us far too long, but I would just say to the Russian representative that tackling terrorism can never be and is not an excuse or a reason for widespread attacks on civilians or for breaching international law.

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

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Belgium.

We note with concern that, despite the military defeat of Da'esh in Iraq and Syria, the group continues to operate clandestinely and carry out attacks — hence, the importance of continuing our efforts within the

coalition to completely defeat the group and its ideology. We are also concerned about developments vis-à-vis Da'esh and Al-Qaida affiliates and supporters in other conflict areas, including in the Sahel, Somalia and the Arabian peninsula. The destructive influence of those terrorist groups, their exploitation of local conflicts and their acquisition of capacities normally limited to States is having disastrous consequences for those regions, as our colleague from the Niger underscored.

The threat has not disappeared in Europe, either. Last Sunday's attack in London, for which Da'esh claimed responsibility, demonstrates once again that the monitoring, rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals linked to such terrorist groups, including lone actors, remain a challenge that is as complex as it is urgent. How can this ever-evolving threat be countered most effectively?

First, it can be countered by continuing the work that we are doing here, including through the development and implementation of appropriate international security measures. Major results have already been achieved. One particular example that comes to mind is the use of Passenger Name Records, Advance Passenger Information and information and communication technologies.

Secondly, we must continue to focus on combating the root causes of violent extremism and terrorism. As the representative of Indonesia mentioned earlier, we co-organized, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), an Arria Formula meeting on radicalization in prisons. Detention and rehabilitation can succeed only if we devote the attention required for the implementation of appropriate prison standards and individualized follow-up programmes, including following the period of detention. We encourage the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to pursue its consideration of this issue with the Member States visited and the UNODC to prioritize it in its capacity-building programmes.

We must also enable civil society to play its full and unimpeded role in combating the spread of terrorism. We note that Da'esh and Al-Qaida continue to exploit vulnerable groups within our societies, the members of which feel marginalized and passed over. Through the joint efforts of States and civil society organizations, we can help marginalized groups overcome their isolation and vulnerability. Such joint efforts will help strengthen the resilience of communities faced

by terrorist narratives and stanch terrorists' ability to recruit new combatants. In that regard, I thank Ms Freij once again for her testimony and commend her on her work within her community.

Lastly and above all, such measures would be futile if they were to contravene international standards concerning human rights, fundamental freedoms and international humanitarian law. Violations of those principles would only reinforce the extremist and violent narratives of terrorist organizations and facilitate their recruitment activities. In that regard, we strongly encourage the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism to pursue his engagement with the Security Council and every State Member.

We look forward to pursuing constructive cooperation with the member States of the Security Council, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, the United Nations United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and all our partners in the fight against international terrorism.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of China has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I have asked for the floor once again to express our firm opposition to the accusations made against China by the representative of the United Kingdom.

Regrettably, the United Kingdom once again blindly followed in the footsteps of the United States against China in the Security Council. Just now, China has comprehensively elaborated its position on Xinjiang and we believe that the United Kingdom has taken note of it. China urges the United Kingdom not to blindly follow the United States in using the Security Council to make trouble, spread rumours and interfere in the internal affairs of China.

The allegations made just now by the British representative about Xinjiang are not new and have no factual basis. However, the United Kingdom has suffered many terrorist attacks in the past, including the recent knife attack in London. We advise the

United Kingdom to abandon its hypocrisy and double standards and face up to its own serious problems of racial discrimination and human rights violations. It will be good for the United Kingdom.

Just now, the representative of the United Kingdom mentioned that State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi raised the situation in Xinjiang in September (see S/PV.8626). That is because we knew that certain countries wanted to try to use that opportunity to attack China and cause trouble. We wish to make it clear that we categorically reject such attempts at provocation.

China's position on Xinjiang remains consistent, and we are firmly opposed to the use of Security Council meetings to discuss the situation in Xinjiang. It is our hope that the members of the Security Council present will in good faith shoulder their responsibility to maintain international peace and security instead of creating political spectacles, spreading rumours and launching unprovoked attacks on other countries. Such behaviour is inconsistent with the role of a Security Council member.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.