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Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Eightieth year

Identical letters dated 23 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Malta addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of the Republic of Malta regarding the United Nations Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies, which was held in Malta and jointly organized with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on 12 and 13 March 2025 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could issue the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 110, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vanessa **Frazier**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the identical letters dated 23 May 2025 from the Permanent Representative of Malta addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

2 May 2025

I am writing to formally present the non-binding Valletta Principles and the summary of discussions, which together represent a large part of the official records of the United Nations Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies (see enclosure).^{*} This Conference was co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of the Republic of Malta and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and held on 12 and 13 March 2025 in St. Julian's, Malta.

Given the rapidly evolving nature of terrorism-related threats – especially the use of new methods and emerging technologies to recruit and bypass law enforcement measures – the Conference sought to ensure that counter-terrorism strategies remain effective, comprehensive and integrated. This includes employing a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The Conference also updated the Bogotá Principles on national and regional counter-terrorism strategies of 2013.

The non-binding Valletta Principles, a set of updated 42 non-binding guiding principles, offer expert recommendations for Member States and regional organizations to consider when developing or reviewing their national and regional counter-terrorism strategies. These updated principles build upon the work of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies, which is chaired by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, with the Office of Counter-Terrorism serving as Vice-Chair, as well as the contributions of the Working Group's entities. They also draw upon the presentations and lessons learned shared during the Conference. Finally, they are premised on Security Council resolutions [1963 \(2010\)](#), [2129 \(2013\)](#), [2395 \(2017\)](#) and [2617 \(2021\)](#), and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In this way, they reinforce the resolutions of both the Security Council and the General Assembly on counter-terrorism strategies.

I am pleased to inform you that the Conference hosted by Malta was attended by 153 participants, representing more than 50 Member States and 1 observer State, as well as key United Nations bodies, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. The Conference provided a platform for sharing specialized expertise, lessons learned, challenges and good practices, while also enabling participants to familiarize themselves with the latest United Nations resolutions and documents on comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies. A compilation of all presentations and statements made during the Conference has been included in the published conference record, which is available for all Member States, regional organizations and all relevant stakeholders to refer to and benefit from.

By hosting and co-organizing this Conference, Malta has reaffirmed its strong commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism, particularly in the critical area of counter-terrorism. The excellent collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate highlights Malta's belief that the United Nations and other international forums should remain central to the global fight against terrorism. Through the non-binding Valletta Principles and the accompanying conference record, Malta aims to actively support the ongoing efforts of Member

^{*} Circulated in the language of submission only.

States, United Nations bodies, regional organizations and relevant stakeholders in addressing the global threats and challenges posed by terrorism.

Moreover, as a long-standing supporter and proud host of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law since 2014, Malta appreciates the special recognition given to strengthening the criminal justice sector as one of the most effective means of countering terrorism. Malta also values the principle that counter-terrorism strategies must include the perspectives and active participation of youth to be effective – an issue that will be a key focus during Malta's upcoming presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

I trust that the specific principles of the non-binding Valletta Principles – particularly its advocacy for a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism – will serve the international community well in the fight against terrorism in the years ahead.

Malta looks forward to continuing its close collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate on counter-terrorism, and with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and other relevant United Nations bodies, particularly on key issues related to women and peace and security and children and armed conflict. Malta also remains open to further opportunities to work with other United Nations bodies, actively promoting shared values and principles.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued hard work and reaffirm Malta's full support and confidence in your crucial roles as Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

(Signed) **Ian Borg**
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism
Republic of Malta

Enclosure

VALLETTA PRINCIPLES ON COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGIES ST. JULIAN'S, MALTA

12 AND 13 MARCH 2025

“Non-binding guiding principles”

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy serves as a valuable blueprint, embraced by all Members States of the United Nations, in providing a comprehensive and integrated approach against terrorism. The Global Strategy's four pillars underscore different and critical ways to, inter alia, prevent terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, suppress terrorist movements, financing and other activities, build national institutional capacities, and uphold respect for human rights, the rule of law and international law.

Principle 2: Security Council resolutions and comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies

In its resolutions, the Security Council encourages Member States to consider developing comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies and effective mechanisms to implement them that include attention to conditions conducive to terrorism, in accordance with their obligations under international law. These resolutions provide a critical foundation for developing strategies based on internationally recognized norms and standards that address the complex and evolving nature of terrorism, foster global cooperation while tailored to the national and regional context.

Principle 3: Adherence to international legal obligations in counter-terrorism efforts

Member States must uphold their obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international refugee law, including in the development and implementation of national counter-terrorism strategies. These legal frameworks provide essential safeguards and ensure that counter-terrorism measures are consistent with international norms, protecting fundamental rights while effectively addressing security concerns.

Principle 4: Comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism

A comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategy should be built upon a multidisciplinary approach, acknowledging that terrorism has deep roots in various societal dimensions. An effective comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy should therefore extend beyond law enforcement measures to include socioeconomic, political, educational, cultural, developmental, human rights, and rule of law aspects, ensuring a holistic response to the complex nature of terrorism.

Principle 5: Clarity in defining terrorism

Effective strategies to address terrorism must be rooted in well-defined, context-specific definitions at the national and regional levels. These definitions should be crafted in a manner that is fully consistent with international counter-terrorism instruments and international human rights standards and frameworks. Definitions of terrorism must be precise, avoiding vagueness or overbroad language that could lead to arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement, abuse of power, or the infringement of fundamental freedoms.

Principle 6: Non-discrimination in counter-terrorism efforts

Counter-terrorism strategies must be grounded in the principle of non-discrimination, ensuring no association between terrorism and any race, religion, nationality or civilization. Effective counter-terrorism efforts should promote inclusivity and foster societal cohesion, ensuring that all communities are treated fairly and equally in the pursuit of security and peace. Strategies should include the recognition that risk assessments must take a holistic and balanced view of potential threats to ensure that there are no gaps in coverage.

Principle 7: Coordination across national strategies

Member States are encouraged to ensure effective coordination between different strategies to prevent overlap and avoid contradictions in responsibilities among relevant ministries and stakeholders. Clear communication and structured collaboration are essential to ensure that each strategy complements the others, optimizing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of counter-terrorism efforts and use of resources, and reducing the risk of conflicting actions.

Principle 8: Oversight, leading entity and coordination mechanism

States should establish a dedicated mechanism or structure, and designate a leading entity with authority, to effectively oversee and coordinate the implementation of their comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategy. Such entity should ensure that any established mechanism in place engages all relevant governmental agencies, law enforcement bodies, and other stakeholders' work in a unified and synchronized manner to achieve the relevant objectives of the counter-terrorism strategy. The leading entity should be responsible for monitoring progress, facilitating communication between agencies and relevant stakeholders, addressing challenges, ensuring accountability, and adapting the strategy as necessary in response to emerging threats or evolving circumstances.

SUBSTANTIVE PRINCIPLES**Principle 9: Comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies**

National strategies to combat terrorism should be comprehensive and integrated, ensuring that they address a broad range of interrelated issues. These strategies must align with and complement other national frameworks, such as those related to law enforcement, border security, the regulation of firearms, the protection of critical infrastructure and soft targets, anti-money-laundering (AML) and countering the financing of terrorism (CFT), and countering the financing of proliferation. By fostering coordination across these sectors, national strategies can create a unified, multifaceted approach that strengthens the country's comprehensive response to terrorism.

Principle 10: Whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach

Member States are encouraged to ensure that comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies are integrated and multidisciplinary by engaging a wide range of different stakeholders from both sectors: governmental (e.g., ministry of interior, ministry of justice, prosecution departments, judiciary, education department/ministry, media/ministry of information, financial intelligence unit and AML/CFT supervisory agencies, ministry of defence, etc.) and non-governmental (e.g., media, civil society, private sector, faith-based organizations; religious leaders; human rights groups, women's and youth groups; local stakeholders at provincial and/or municipal levels.)

Principle 11: Clearly defined scope and objectives of counter-terrorism strategies

An effective comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategy should have its scope and objectives clearly defined to ensure focus and coherence in its implementation, guiding all efforts towards tangible and achievable objectives that are both specific and measurable. These objectives should align with the overarching goals of the strategy, be realistic in terms of available resources, and set a clear road map for success.

Principle 12: Strengthening law enforcement and intelligence integration in national counter-terrorism strategies

Law enforcement and intelligence agencies are critical to the formulation and execution of national counter-terrorism strategies owing to their pivotal role in threat analysis, risk assessment, and the identification of immediate responses. These agencies are often the first responders, and their expertise in gathering intelligence and assessing security risks is essential for anticipating and mitigating terrorist threats. Their efforts must be closely integrated or coordinated with broader border management strategies to ensure that counter-terrorism measures are comprehensive and well-integrated. By aligning existing law enforcement, intelligence and border management frameworks with their national counter-terrorism strategy, Governments can create a more unified and responsive security apparatus. Strengthening law enforcement and intelligence integration fosters timely and well-informed decision-making, mobilizing the right resources and ensuring a more effective approach to addressing evolving security challenges.

Principle 13: Strengthening the criminal justice sector

Counter-terrorism strategies should acknowledge that States have an obligation to bring terrorists to justice and to engage in effective international cooperation with other States to ensure that there is no impunity for terrorist crimes. This requires efforts to strengthen the criminal justice system to ensure that it has the capacity to effectively investigate and prosecute terrorist crimes. Strategies should include efforts to enhance States' processes and legal structures to ensure swift international cooperation in the preservation and sharing of evidence that may be electronic, classified, or obtained from conflict zones, the speedy execution of mutual assistance requests, the ability to contribute to joint investigative teams, and the ability to transfer proceedings. States with returning foreign terrorist fighters, or those emerging from conflict, should elaborate prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies that allow for effective screening and assessment of individuals to determine the most appropriate response.

Principle 14: Integration of terrorism financing investigations

Combating terrorism financing is an integral part of effective counter-terrorism strategies. National counter-terrorism strategies should incorporate terrorism-financing investigations and prosecutions as essential components of combating terrorism. Strategies should provide clear guidance on conducting parallel financial investigations, prioritizing them, and ensuring effective inter-agency collaboration, while utilizing financial intelligence to support policy priorities against identified terrorism and financing threats. Finally, counter-financing of terrorism principles, such as risk understanding and risk-based policy and operational alignment, can mutually reinforce efforts to combat terrorism.

Principle 15: Counter-terrorism strategies should address conditions conducive to terrorism

Any act of terrorism is criminal and unjustifiable in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of the motivations behind it. Comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies should address factors conducive to the spread of terrorism, including but not limited to prolonged unresolved conflicts, lack of the rule of law, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socioeconomic marginalization and lack of good governance. Effective counter-terrorism strategies must consider factors that contribute to the prevention of terrorism and the effective response to it. This includes addressing a wide range of underlying conditions that could fuel violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Principle 16: Compliance with international law in counter-terrorism strategies

National counter-terrorism strategies must comply with international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international refugee law. Member States are encouraged to consider and be guided by the OHCHR Toolkit on Strengthening Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Policy when designing, implementing, reviewing, and evaluating these strategies, ensuring that they align with international human rights norms and standards.

Principle 17: Evidence-based and risk-driven approach to national counter-terrorism strategy development

Evidence-based analysis of the terrorist threat is a key starting point when developing national counter-terrorism strategies. The strategy should be context specific and respond in a necessary and proportionate manner to the threats identified by the Government and other relevant stakeholders of society.

Principle 18: Engagement with civil society in counter-terrorism efforts

Engaging with civil society is crucial in the development and implementation of comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies. This engagement, in line with relevant international resolutions, enhances the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts by enabling, among other things, identifying conditions conducive to terrorism, advocating for human rights, providing necessary social services, and supporting community-based resilience strategies. By involving civil society, counter-terrorism measures become more inclusive, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of affected communities. National leadership and local ownership are important aspects, together with engagement of diverse stakeholders, such as civil society, academia, the private sector and the broader public.

Principle 19: Integrating a gender perspective into counter-terrorism strategies

Member States are encouraged to integrate a gender perspective into comprehensive and integrated national and regional counter-terrorism strategies in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the relevant international and regional frameworks and instruments. This approach helps to ensure more inclusive, equitable, and targeted interventions in the process of developing and implementing counter-terrorism strategies.

Principle 20: Importance of public-private partnerships

National counter-terrorism strategies should prioritize developing and/or enhancing frameworks for robust public-private partnerships (PPP) to share information, enhance understanding of evolving trends, and increase the knowledge and skills of relevant experts and stakeholders. Such partnerships should operate with a clear legal basis for the sharing of information, including criteria and purposes for which information may be shared and the entities with which it can be shared. PPPs have also served as a useful forum for the authorities to disseminate regular guidance to the private sector, including risk indicators. Building upon effective PPPs to use the available technology and data can help to enhance operational and tactical analysis and map terrorist networks.

Principle 21: Comprehensive approaches to address radicalization to terrorism

Without prejudice to existing countering violent extremism strategies, comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies must invest in a range of proactive mechanisms to mitigate the growing challenges of radicalization to terrorism, particularly online. These include education, disengagement programmes, content management, and the development of counter-narrative and other preventive measures aimed at disrupting pathways for radicalization to terrorism. Counter-narratives should aim not only to rebut terrorists' messages but also to amplify positive narratives, to provide credible alternatives and address issues of concern to vulnerable audiences who are subject to terrorist narratives. By employing these multifaceted approaches, Member States can strengthen community resilience, reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies, and ensure a more effective and sustainable response to the threat of terrorism. Strategies should also encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism online.

Principle 22: Provision of assistance and protection to victims of terrorism in counter-terrorism strategies

Counter-terrorism strategies must address the rights and well-being of victims of terrorism by ensuring comprehensive assistance and protection. This includes not only providing immediate and effective support to victims in the aftermath of terrorist attacks but also ensuring their long-term recovery and rehabilitation. In addition, counter-terrorism strategies should ensure that the needs and rights of victims, including gender dimensions, are fully integrated into both the prevention and response phases of counter-terrorism strategies. By addressing these concerns, Member States demonstrate a commitment not only to combating terrorism but also to upholding the dignity and rights of those affected by it, contributing to social resilience and long-term peace.

Principle 23: Role of civil society in comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies

Civil society plays a vital role in preventing and countering terrorism by, inter alia, fostering community resilience, promoting social cohesion, and addressing conditions conducive to terrorism. Civil society organizations can bridge the gap between

communities and authorities. When civic space is protected and safeguarded, civil society organizations, the media, and individuals can contribute to the identification of conditions conducive to terrorism, provide necessary social services, and support community-based resilience strategies.

Principle 24: Incorporating the role of youth in counter-terrorism strategies

Incorporating the perspectives and active participation of youth in comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies is crucial for their effectiveness. By recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities that youth face, strategies can be tailored to prevent radicalization to terrorism and build resilience. Engaging youth in counter-terrorism efforts ensures that interventions are more relevant, sustainable, and impactful, fostering a sense of empowerment and shared responsibility while promoting long-term peace and security.

Principle 25: Importance of international, multilateral, and bilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism strategies

Effective counter-terrorism measures require robust international, multilateral, and bilateral cooperation to address the global nature of terrorist threats. This cooperation spans various areas, including law enforcement, judicial collaboration, and capacity-building. Bilateral partnerships facilitate focused cooperation, information exchange, and technical support tailored to specific challenges. Meanwhile, international cooperation strengthens the effectiveness and sustainability of counter-terrorism strategies, fostering a more secure and resilient global community.

Principle 26: Role of technology companies in comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies

Technology companies play a crucial role in counter-terrorism efforts by preventing the misuse of digital platforms for radicalization to terrorism, recruitment, and the spread of extremist content while upholding fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and privacy in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Principle 27: Role of cities in comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies

Cities play a pivotal role in the development and implementation of effective counter-terrorism strategies, given their proximity to communities and their capacity to address local vulnerabilities. Municipal authorities should work collaboratively with national governments, law enforcement, civil society, and international partners to prevent radicalization to terrorism, enhance public safety, and ensure preparedness and response mechanisms are in place.

Principle 28: Role of parliamentarians in the development and implementation of counter-terrorism strategies

Parliamentarians play a vital role in developing and implementing counter-terrorism strategies by enacting legislation, ensuring oversight and accountability, and allocating resources effectively. They contribute to evidence-based policymaking, uphold human rights and the rule of law, and engage with the public to strengthen resilience to extremist narratives. Through these actions, parliamentarians help to create balanced, effective, and rights-based counter-terrorism strategies that enhance security while safeguarding democratic values.

Regional counter-terrorism strategies

Principle 29: Regional counter-terrorism strategies are critical to address terrorism threats within the region

Regional counter-terrorism strategies are essential for effectively addressing terrorism threats within a specific region, as they allow for a coordinated and tailored approach that takes into account the unique political, social, and cultural dynamics of the area. By working together, regional actors can identify common threats, share intelligence, and coordinate responses that are more efficient and comprehensive than isolated national efforts. Such strategies enable the pooling of resources, expertise, and capabilities, which is particularly important in regions where terrorism transcends national borders or where local conflicts contribute to instability. A regional approach also facilitates the development of policies that address the conditions conducive to terrorism, while promoting greater regional stability and resilience. By aligning priorities and fostering closer cooperation, regional counter-terrorism strategies create a more unified and sustainable effort to combat terrorism and safeguard the security and well-being of the region.

Principle 30: Alignment with regional frameworks

In the development of comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies, efforts are encouraged to align these national measures with regional frameworks, strategies, and conventions. Such alignment ensures that the implementation of both national and regional strategies is facilitated, promoting coherence and effectiveness in counter-terrorism efforts on the national and regional levels.

PROCEDURAL PRINCIPLES

Principle 31: Expert-led, inclusive counter-terrorism strategy development

The development of counter-terrorism strategies should be led by subject matter experts with diverse thematic backgrounds. This process should involve a thorough evaluation of the national and local context, as well as regional and international frameworks. In addition, the drafting should incorporate lessons from similar Member States and be subject to ongoing consultations with a broad range of multidisciplinary stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and comprehensiveness in the strategy's formulation.

Principle 32: Inclusive and multidisciplinary stakeholder engagement

A multidisciplinary counter-terrorism approach requires the involvement of diverse stakeholders, including governmental and non-governmental actors, local communities, civil society organizations, academia, the media, the private sector, and humanitarian organizations. These stakeholders should be integrated from the outset and throughout the development, implementation, and ongoing processes of national strategies.

Principle 33: Internal coordination and implementation mechanism

A comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategy should be grounded in effective internal coordination, consider existing legal and institutional frameworks – such as those related to law enforcement, border control, and anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism. Effective counter-terrorism strategies should be supported by implementing mechanisms, such as a national inter-agency coordination mechanism, fusion centres, or other similar entities, to gather, analyse, and share information on national security matters like terrorism. These mechanisms

facilitate effective local, national, and regional threat analysis, inform decision-making, and support coordinated efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Established mechanisms should facilitate effective information-sharing and coordination between law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and financial institutions – both the regulators and the private sector.

Principle 34: Seamless coordination from policy to operations

Effective coordination must ensure the smooth translation of strategic objectives into actionable steps, aligning priorities, resources, and frameworks at the policy level, and adapting them to specific operational areas, such as law enforcement, border control, and terrorism financing, to maximize the effectiveness of national counter-terrorism efforts across all levels.

Principle 35: The disruption of terrorism financing is a whole-of-government and whole-of-society responsibility

Key anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism commitments should be incorporated into national counter-terrorism strategies to ensure that disrupting the financing of terrorism is accepted as a whole-of-government and whole-of-society responsibility. National strategies should encourage States to effectively use intelligence to identify and disrupt terrorist financing networks, focusing on the individuals, groups, and methods used to raise, move, and use funds, including with the use of emerging technologies. Inter-agency cooperation and dedicated coordination mechanisms have proved useful to ensure timely information exchange and parallel investigations. National counter-terrorism strategies should also recognize that sharing counter-terrorism and CFT information, and access to data, are also critical building blocks of national risk management.

Principle 36: The role of counter-terrorism coordinating bodies

Counter-terrorism or leading coordinating bodies are essential for the effective coordination and integration of national, regional, and international counter-terrorism policies and strategies. These bodies are responsible for responding to evolving national, regional, and international threats and mitigating associated risks. They play a crucial role in consolidating efforts and facilitating collaboration across different levels, acting as key conduits for aligning and harmonizing strategies. Such bodies ensure that the counter-terrorism response is coordinated, comprehensive, and adaptable to emerging challenges, while also fostering synergy among international, regional, and national strategies.

Principle 37: Adequate resource allocation for implementation

Sufficient resources must be allocated to the relevant agencies to enable them to effectively carry out the tasks assigned in the implementation of the national counter-terrorism strategy. This includes ensuring that agencies have the necessary financial, technical, and human resources, including specialized expertise to address the complex and evolving nature of counter-terrorism efforts. Resource allocation should be sufficient to support the effective execution of strategies, enhance capacity, and ensure the protection of fundamental rights in the course of counter-terrorism operations.

Principle 38: Ongoing evaluation and adaptation of strategies

The evaluation of counter-terrorism strategies must involve regular monitoring and review of the implementing mechanisms to assess their effectiveness in achieving the desired objectives. The review should involve relevant stakeholders to ensure

effectiveness in addressing new and evolving threats and challenges. This process should identify strengths and weaknesses, enabling adjustments to be made where necessary. The evaluation process should be flexible and adaptive, allowing it to respond to the evolving nature of terrorist threats and emerging trends. By incorporating ongoing evaluation, strategies can remain dynamic and responsive to changing circumstances, ensuring their continuing relevance and effectiveness.

Regional counter-terrorism strategies

Principle 39: Collaboration and coordination in strategy development

Member States have the primary responsibility for national security. At the same time, they are encouraged to actively engage in consultation with relevant national counter-terrorism strategies when formulating regional counter-terrorism strategies. This collaborative approach ensures consistency, prevents duplication of efforts, and fosters the sharing of good practices and lessons learned, thereby strengthening national, regional and international security in the fight against terrorism.

Principle 40: Reinforcing regional counter-terrorism strategies through a well-resourced secretariat

A well-resourced regional secretariat is essential for the effective coordination, implementation, and sustainability of regional counter-terrorism strategies. Adequate financial, technical, and human resources must be allocated to ensure their effectiveness and the ability to respond to evolving threats and challenges and, where applicable, in supporting State parties. By strengthening regional cooperation through a dedicated secretariat, States can enhance collective preparedness, streamline efforts, and foster a harmonized approach to counter-terrorism.

Principle 41: Interregional cooperation when developing or implementing regional counter-terrorism strategies

Regional organizations are encouraged to share knowledge, lessons learned, and good practices when developing or implementing their counter-terrorism strategies, while considering the regional and national context of their member States. In addition, by coordinating joint efforts, regions can strengthen their collective response to the global threat of terrorism. Ultimately, this collaborative approach fosters transnational cooperation, which is essential to addressing the threat of terrorism that transcends regional borders.

Principle 42: Alignment with international legal frameworks in regional counter-terrorism strategies

Regional counter-terrorism strategies should be developed with full regard to the legal obligations of States parties under international law, which include adherence to relevant United Nations resolutions on counter-terrorism. Regional counter-terrorism strategies developed under the auspices of relevant regional organization should also facilitate member States' adherence to their obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international refugee law.

Summary of Discussions

United Nations Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies Valletta, Malta 12 – 13 March 2025

*Organized by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive
Directorate (UNCTED) in partnership with the Government of Malta.*

Background

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy ([A/RES/60/288](#)), adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006, represents an important milestone in the collective pursuit of United Nations Member States towards strengthening the global response to terrorism, based on a common strategic and operational framework. Four pillars of action underpin the Strategy, namely:

- Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism;
- Measures to prevent and combat terrorism;
- Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; and
- Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

The Global Strategy is periodically reviewed by the Assembly to ensure it remains aligned with Member States' counter-terrorism priorities. The most recent review of the Global Strategy was adopted by the Assembly on 22 June 2023 ([A/RES/77/298](#)).

In December 2010, in its resolution [1963 \(2010\)](#), the Security Council encouraged the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to arrange meetings with Member States for the purpose of considering and advising, as appropriate, on the development of comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies and the mechanisms to implement them that include attention to the factors that lead to terrorist activities, in accordance with their obligations under international law.

In February 2013, CTED, along with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the Government of Colombia, organized an International Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Bogotá. Participants at the Conference focused on identifying principles that Member States and regional organizations were encouraged to bear in mind when developing, implementing and reviewing national and regional counter-terrorism strategies. These became known as the Bogotá Principles. Since then, these non-binding guiding principles have served as a resource document for Member States and regional organizations when developing their national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

In subsequent resolutions, including [2129 \(2013\)](#), [2395 \(2017\)](#), and [2617 \(2021\)](#), the Security Council called upon Member States to consider developing comprehensive and integrated national counter-terrorism strategies and effective mechanisms for their implementation that include attention to the conditions conducive to terrorism, in accordance with their obligations under international law. In these resolutions, the Council also encourages CTED to assess and advise on the development of such strategies, including the mechanisms to implement them.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies (NARS), chaired by CTED with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism as Vice-Chair, promotes a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, including through meaningful engagement of diverse civil society actors, in the development, evaluation and/or revision of counter-terrorism strategies by Member States and regional organizations.

Given the evolving threats and challenges of terrorism since 2013, a further inclusive and holistic approach is required, bringing all relevant stakeholders together. Evolving threats and challenges include terrorists' ability to increasingly bypass traditional law enforcement measures with sophisticated methods to avoid detection and identification. Terrorists are also advancing methods to recruit, plan, and finance

terrorist activities using the Internet, social media, and new and emerging technologies. Furthermore, the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon, returnees and relocators, and the rise of attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, pose numerous challenges.

Countering these challenges will require States to institutionalize cooperation both within and between agencies, ensuring timely information exchange across all levels of government and with other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, terrorists' ability to adapt to various contexts and response measures has resulted in an increasing overlap between various techniques and methods, as well as in a growing nexus between terrorism and organized crime. With the emergence of new technologies, the use of sophisticated operational schemes will likely become more prevalent. At the same time, terrorists are unlikely to abandon the current methods to organize, finance and execute their operations altogether; instead, they will devise new approaches and techniques to enhance the use of these methods in a manner that suits their needs. The complexity of these methods necessitates a comprehensive, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to effectively address these threats and related challenges. This will also require overcoming institutional obstacles such as silos and turf battles, as well as fostering new partnerships both within and beyond government to ensure all relevant stakeholders are involved in preventing and countering terrorism.

To support Member States' and regional organizations' efforts to address these new and evolving realities and in line with the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, particularly those adopted since 2013, CTED, in partnership with the Government of Malta, organized the United Nations Conference on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies in St Julian's on 12 and 13 March 2025. The Conference was attended by experts from Member States, United Nations bodies, international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector. The Conference offered participants and invitees the opportunity to share lessons learned, including good practices and ongoing challenges, while also allowing participants to familiarize themselves with the latest relevant United Nations resolutions and related international norms. The Conference concluded with identifying an updated set of non-binding guiding principles that could serve as a resource reference for Member States, regional organizations, United Nations bodies and relevant stakeholders that are engaged in developing, implementing and/or reviewing comprehensive and integrated national or regional counter-terrorism strategies.

This document is a summary record of the discussion at the Conference.

Welcome and overview of the United Nations' work on national and regional counter-terrorism strategies and trends in developing and implementing counter-terrorism strategies

In opening the Conference, the President of Malta recalled that “literacy” was one of Malta’s priorities during its term on the Security Council from 2023 to 2024. Malta sees literacy in its wider sense as a whole-of-society tool for peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Malta believes that literacy equips citizens and youth with the necessary skills to distinguish between what is fact and what is false. It empowers them to recognize and push back on mis- and disinformation and reject agendas that call for violence and violent extremism.

In welcoming delegates to Malta, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta reaffirmed Malta’s commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism. Recalling that 2025 started with shocking attacks in New Orleans, Burkina Faso and Mali, he reaffirmed that the international community must play a proactive role, not a reactive one, based on key principles such as human rights and the rule of law. The rising threat of violent, racially and ethnically motivated terrorism, which often targets minority communities, has potentially serious consequences for societal cohesion.

He also noted that we must ensure that our counter-terrorism strategies focus on addressing the root causes of terrorism, going beyond solely targeting the organizations and individuals involved. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of a robust and open civic space to the success of counter-terrorism efforts, a position that was also emphasized by a wide range of delegates. Engagement with civil society ensures accountability and reinforces our collective commitment to lasting peace and security.

As a co-organizer of the Conference, the CTED Executive Director expressed gratitude to the Government of Malta for its tireless efforts in making the Conference possible and for generously hosting participants. She noted that CTED’s assessments, made on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, analyse and evaluate Member States’ counter-terrorism measures, including their national strategies. These assessments highlight promising practices, as well as persistent challenges. The Executive Director also noted the relevance of the Conference to the implementation of the Pact for the Future, adopted at the United Nations in September 2024, which contained a strong commitment to a world free from terrorism.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the United Nations Global Compact NARS Working Group gave an overview of its work, in particular since the 2013 Bogotá Conference, including on the trends in developing and implementing counter-terrorism strategies.

The Chair of the Working Group noted that consistent with a whole-of-government approach, all 46 diverse members and observers of the Compact have been committed to addressing the evolving challenge of terrorism. The diverse mandates of United Nations entities and its partners within the Global Compact speak to the necessity of addressing terrorism from every possible angle.

However, the reality remains that the terrorist threat continues to evolve, and we must evolve with it. Key questions to be addressed by the Conference include: *How can we better coordinate? How can we better communicate? How do we bring together agencies, sectors, and societies to work not in isolation but in concert?* The Valletta Principles are our chance to stay ahead of the curve, to look beyond the immediate challenges and create an approach that is not only responsive, but anticipatory.

The Bogotá Principles called for a broader perspective in counter-terrorism, expanding beyond intelligence and law enforcement. Today, we must ask: *How can we further expand our approach to tackle emerging threats and challenges?* Terrorist groups have adopted new tactics and new recruitment methods, and new forms of radicalization continue to evolve. *How can we adapt to these shifts?* The Bogotá Principles laid the foundation for a whole-of-society approach. It has become clear that holistic strategies have a better chance of succeeding in this ever-changing landscape.

The Vice-Chair of the Working Group informed the meeting of the latest assessments of the United Nations with respect to the specific threats posed by ISIL (Da'esh) and its affiliates. They have adapted to counter-terrorism pressure by becoming less centralized, allowing them to remain resilient and continue their activities despite efforts to dismantle their operations. Da'esh continues to exploit security vacuums.

The Vice-Chair offered four lessons that have been observed by UNOCT with respect to regional strategies. First, regional approaches vary, and while some provide strategic direction to counter-terrorism efforts, in others the regional work has not been used to the extent it could have been. Second, regional strategies reference overarching United Nations norms, including the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and legal instruments, but less expressly the Bogotá Principles. Third, the capacity of civil society is not uniform within States or across regions, and regional strategies remain primarily State- and security sector-focused, rather than taking a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Fourth, only a few regional strategies have incorporated monitoring, evaluation, learning or review mechanisms. Strategies should include actions points that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART). The Vice-Chair's recommendations were to expand civil society involvement, reinforce regional secretariats, build on existing partnerships, implement periodic monitoring, evaluation and assessment, and broaden normative frameworks.

All of the speakers during the opening sessions emphasized that terrorism is a global challenge that requires holistic responses, where all States cooperate towards a common goal. Governments have a duty to protect their citizens, infrastructure, and institutions from terrorist threats. The speakers also noted that because terrorism is an ever-evolving threat, accelerated by technological changes, from the exploitation of remote-controlled drones to the use of AI for recruitment, societies must stay vigilant, and responses must be continuously updated.

But in doing so, measures adopted to fight terrorism must also contain necessary safeguards, so they do not infringe on the rights and freedoms that citizens enjoy and that governments have the duty to protect. Inclusivity is vital in preventing the marginalization of communities and promoting societal cohesion. Due consideration should also be given to gender-sensitive perspectives that recognize the fundamental role that women have to play in preventing radicalization and leading recovery efforts in post-conflict settings. Compliance with international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law, was also highlighted.

We therefore need robust national counter-terrorism strategies that provide for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach with adequate protection of civic space. Strategies must also address the underlying conditions conducive to terrorism such as access to education, economic opportunities, and platforms for dialogue.

National comprehensive and integrated counter-terrorism strategies (good practices, challenges and lessons learned)

The Conference began with an overview of the analysis of lessons learned by Global Compact entities in key aspects of national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

A. Countering the financing of terrorism

On the financing of terrorism, CTED noted that depriving terrorists of financial, material and logistical sources of support needs to be a key element of any counter-terrorism strategy. Strategies should provide for strong internal coordination among relevant national entities, including those involved in financial investigations. This requires a multi-stakeholder approach, including robust public-private partnerships and a risk-based approach rooted in evidence-based assessments. Where particular risks are identified by the financial sector (for example, increased use of social media to solicit funds for terrorist purposes), a well-coordinated strategy would result in justice sector investigative approaches adapting to address those threats (for example, developing an investigative strategy for capturing and making use of online information, including requesting and preserving evidence from service providers). Common priorities need to be identified and resources allocated.

States should have separate and more detailed anti-money-laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (CFT) strategies. But nonetheless, there are key commitments that should still be incorporated into national counter-terrorism strategies to ensure that disrupting the financing of terrorism is accepted as a whole-of-government and whole-of-society responsibility.

This includes a high-level commitment that explicitly sets out guidance on the need to conduct parallel financial investigations and prosecutions in all terrorism-related cases, the forms those investigations might take, prioritization of terrorism-financing investigations and the way in which the different agencies would interact. National strategies should commit States to effectively use intelligence to identify and disrupt terrorism-financing networks, focusing on the individuals, groups, and methods used to raise, move, and use funds, including with the use of emerging technologies. Here too, inter-agency cooperation and dedicated coordination mechanisms have proved useful to ensure timely information exchange and parallel investigations.

National counter-terrorism strategies should also recognize that sharing counter-terrorism and CFT information, and access to data, are also critical building blocks of national risk management. Strategies should establish mechanisms for effective information-sharing and coordination between law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and financial institutions – both the regulators and the private sector. Indeed, national coordinating committees play a fundamental role in the development and implementation of effective disruption strategies and provide a framework for operational cooperation between relevant agencies and the private sector. Public-private partnerships on CFT matters are essential and show that even on sensitive matters related to national security, collaboration and dialogue are possible and, in fact, are mutually supportive.

It is also important to recognize at the level of the national strategy that some measures aimed at countering the financing of terrorism may have unintended consequences. The national strategy should contain a commitment to evaluate the impact of any unintended consequences of CFT measures on human rights, financial inclusion, and legitimate NPO activities, as well as on exclusively humanitarian activity, and to effectively mitigate those consequences.

B. Protecting human rights while countering terrorism

Counter-terrorism strategies should explicitly state that counter-terrorism measures should comply with international human rights law. This is not just because States are legally bound to the human rights treaties that they are party to but because it makes sense to do so. Counter-terrorism measures that violate human rights can create fresh grievances or exacerbate old ones and nourish conditions conducive to terrorism.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has published a toolkit on Strengthening Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Policy. The toolkit demonstrates how to integrate human rights into the content of a counter-terrorism strategy, how to build institutional human rights specialist capacity in counter-terrorism, and how to strengthen government engagement with civil society. Included in the toolkit is a description of the questions that governments should work through in analysing whether a restriction on a human right complies with international human rights law, and how to apply it to counter-terrorism measures. The toolkit also demonstrates how to assess risks to human rights posed by counter-terrorism measures.

Giving the example of how to integrate the right to life, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that a counter-terrorism strategy should reaffirm a State's obligation to uphold the right to life and recognize that terrorism is a threat to life. It should also acknowledge the rights of victims and their families to obtain effective remedy and reparations, including assistance.

Equally, a counter-terrorism strategy should set out the legal frameworks that control and limit the circumstances in which law enforcement offices may resort to lethal force. If the military is deployed to counter terrorism, the strategy – and the legal framework governing military force – should clearly set out that the powers granted to armed forces for public security tasks should be exceptional, time limited, subordinate and accountable to civilian authorities, and in accordance with national civilian law and international human rights law. There should also be independent and impartial oversight, especially when deaths occur.

When it comes to civil society, engagement is important because it can help to improve a strategy when the drafters learn from and better understand groups with direct experience of the effects and impacts of terrorism and counter-terrorism measures. It builds legitimacy and trust in the government's counter-terrorism measures, and it increases transparency and understanding of the government's actions. The toolkit sets out the core principles and practical steps for engagement with civil society in counter-terrorism.

The Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism stressed that counter-terrorism strategies must be based on definitions of terrorism that are consistent with international human rights law and are not vague or overly broad and subject to abuse. On this point, attention was drawn to the Analytical Brief published in June 2024 by CTED, containing a summary of recommendations from the Counter-Terrorism Committee on the codification of the crime of terrorism.

The Special Rapporteur called on governments to genuinely reflect on how their own human rights violations could stoke grievances that fuel terrorism. Counter-terrorism strategies should provide for adequate oversight, accountability and remedies for counter-terrorism measures that result in human rights violations. He also emphasized that strategies should be made public and not remain secret. Finally, he highlighted that regional organizations should play a leadership role through their regional

strategies in promoting human rights compliance and other good practices amongst Member States, including through greater use of regional human rights monitoring.

C. Integration of law enforcement and border security into the national counter-terrorism strategy

Intelligence and law enforcement agencies play a critical role in counter-terrorism, providing intelligence gathering, threat assessment, identification and disruption of terrorist threats. Border security is also critical, serving as the first line of defence against attempts by terrorists to cross borders, and the illicit movement of foreign terrorist fighters, cash, goods and cargo.

States should have specific and detailed law enforcement strategies, prosecution strategies, and border management strategies, but key aspects of the high-level commitments from these documents should appear in the national counter-terrorism strategy. The national strategy should provide for enhanced information-sharing between agencies and coordination between them, including their respective strategies, to prevent gaps in security and ensure a comprehensive and unified response. This should also promote resource optimization, avoiding duplication of efforts.

Intelligence, law enforcement and border security agencies are the leading sources of threat information and should be jointly responsible for performing the risk management process at the national- and sector-specific levels. National strategies should recognize, however, that intelligence, law enforcement and border security agencies increasingly rely on external stakeholders as sources of information and partners in planning and designing counter-terrorism measures.

Counter-terrorism measures should be risk based, requiring effective risk management that includes all stakeholders. The national strategy should clearly describe the risk management process, including identifying the difference between risk assessment and threat assessment. While the actual risk assessment, including the identification of targets, assessing threats, identifying risk mitigation measures, and managing the residual risks, is a process that should happen separately and periodically, National strategies should mandate them, including their review and the periodicity for updates.

More broadly, agencies should cooperate on counter-terrorism measures through a defined institutional structure that assigns a lead entity and clear roles, ensures seamless inter-agency collaboration and coordination, and results in the efficient use of resources, increased inclusiveness, and enhanced situational awareness.

D. Integrating gender aspects

The year 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security, as well as 10 years since the adoption of resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#), in which the Council called upon Member States and United Nations entities to integrate gender into efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

The development of the Valletta Principles thus provides a timely opportunity to ensure that gender considerations are integrated into regional and national counter-terrorism strategies. There is now a robust evidence base on the importance of gender for effective and sustainable counter-terrorism strategies, as well as on both gaps and good practices in Member States' implementation of this issue.

Terrorist groups understand the importance of gender, and counter-terrorism responses therefore cannot afford to lag behind. Terrorist groups tailor their messages and recruitment strategies to the specific vulnerabilities of men and women. They exploit ideas about femininity and masculinity in their narratives and operational methods. Da'esh has been very skilled at tailoring its message to women, tapping into their gendered grievances, and often using female recruiters to target women. It is thus essential to address gender inequality and other forms of discrimination as a condition that can be conducive to terrorism and to integrate gender analysis into threat assessments.

The Security Council has also recognized the differential impact on the human rights of women and girls of terrorism and violent extremism, including in the context of their health, education, and participation in public life, and that they are often directly targeted by terrorist groups, including through the use of sexual and gender-based violence.

CTED highlighted the essential roles played by women-led civil society organizations, women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism conducive to terrorism, in building community resilience and delivering front-line support to victims of terrorism, often at great personal risk. Engagement with women is also essential in understanding the impact of counter-terrorism strategies on their human rights.

E. Providing technical support to Member States to develop national counter-terrorism strategies

Members of the Global Compact Working Group on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies provide technical support to Member States and regional organizations on developing counter-terrorism strategies.

CTED, as part of its assessment mandate, assesses every Member State in its implementation of the Security Council's recommendations on counter-terrorism strategies. Assessed States will receive guidance and recommendations from the Counter-Terrorism Committee on their strategies, if they have them, or an encouragement to draft one, if they do not. The Committee consistently recommends that strategies be comprehensive and integrated and take a whole-of-government and whole-of society approach. The Committee will also recommend that both the drafting of, and subsequent review and updating of, strategies be done in consultation with all relevant government agencies, the private sector, municipalities, religious organizations and civil society.

Both UNODC and UNOCT have provided technical support to States to implement the Committee's recommendations, often with input and support from CTED and the NARS Working Group. UNODC provided an example of such a process to the Conference and identified important lessons learned. These include the need to secure high-level political commitment, government ownership of the process, the need to undertake extensive preparatory work reviewing international practice and the local context, the importance of public consultation, and the need to promote a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, including gender and youth considerations and human rights.

Working group sessions 1 and 2: Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches

Participants stressed the primary role of States and their competent authorities in developing national and regional counter-terrorism strategies. In this process, political commitment is crucial, alongside adequate funding to ensure both feasibility and credibility. Governments must allocate sufficient financial and human resources to counter-terrorism agencies, equipping them with the necessary tools, training, and technology to operate effectively.

Speakers highlighted the importance of transparency in the development of counter-terrorism strategies. It was noted that not all strategies or action plans are made public, particularly those with a strong security sector focus. In such cases, public engagement is often limited or lacking, making it less of a whole-of-society effort. To address this, strategic communications are necessary to keep citizens informed throughout the process.

Effective counter-terrorism requires seamless coordination across multiple government agencies, ensuring an integrated and well-structured response to threats. Clear frameworks should define the roles and responsibilities of each agency, avoiding jurisdictional conflicts and ensuring accountability.

Parliamentarians also play a fundamental role in overseeing the implementation of counter-terrorism strategies from three perspectives. Firstly, they provide oversight over the actions of agencies with counter-terrorism responsibilities. Secondly, they legislate into national law the United Nations' resolutions and international instruments on counter-terrorism. Thirdly, they adopt national budgets and allocate resources to the security and justice sectors.

Participants noted that there has been an increased focus on sectoral strategies and the inclusion of counter-terrorism elements within these. Participants noted that Member States could draw valuable lessons from the development of these sectoral strategies, particularly in ensuring a whole-of-society response.

In addition to a whole-of-government approach, participants emphasized the importance of strengthening a whole-of-United Nations approach to enhance coordination and maximize impact.

Participants emphasized the crucial role of civil society, the private sector, and local communities in identifying and addressing radicalization and extremist activities. They agreed that civil society should be actively included in the process of developing counter-terrorism strategies. The United Nations, leveraging its convening power and extensive network, has played a key role in encouraging civil society participation through consultations and public-private engagement initiatives.

It was emphasized that the Working Group on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies notes that a whole-of-society approach is more commonly accepted and embraced in regions less affected by terrorism or those having a reduced perception of the terrorist threat. It is important to understand the reasons behind this trend to ensure that inclusive counter-terrorism efforts are implemented globally.

Panellists highlighted the significant role of local governments and cities, as they are at the front line of managing community tensions, countering hate, and addressing violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Participants discussed how local governments, through their delivery of public services, can tackle drivers conducive to radicalization. They underscored the necessity of cooperation between national and local structures to allow for prompt responses to emerging threats. To ensure a comprehensive strategy, participants recommended that cities and local authorities be

included in the development and implementation of national counter-terrorism strategies, taking into account their unique perspectives and priorities. They also emphasized that despite their vital role, local governments are often overlooked, lack awareness of their potential contributions, or do not possess the necessary resources and capacities.

Participants also acknowledged the essential role of victims of terrorism in shaping and implementing counter-terrorism strategies. A Member State shared its national experience, highlighting the importance of providing comprehensive and ongoing support and assistance to victims, based on respect for their dignity and memory.

The discussion further explored preventive approaches employed by some Member States. Participants observed that these approaches are multidisciplinary and require collaboration across multiple sectors, including security, social welfare, education, and health care, at both national and local levels. They emphasized the importance of engaging civil society, religious institutions, and academia in these initiatives. Regular training for relevant professionals and the development of practical tools and guidelines were identified as key components of effective prevention. Participants stressed the necessity of involving end users in the design of counter-terrorism strategies to foster active engagement in their implementation.

Participants recommended that public awareness campaigns be launched to educate citizens on recognizing signs of radicalization and reporting suspicious activities, ensuring that communities do not feel stigmatized. They also emphasized the value of community policing initiatives in building trust between law enforcement and the public, strengthening networks for information gathering and crisis response. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of multidisciplinary approaches through partnerships with educational institutions, social organizations, and religious leaders to counter extremist narratives and provide alternative perspectives. The role of the private sector, including technology companies and financial institutions, was deemed essential in detecting and disrupting terrorist activities, enhancing security measures, and preventing the misuse of commercial platforms and services. Participants called for continued encouragement of public-private partnerships in this domain.

Regarding legal and policy frameworks, participants underscored the necessity of a comprehensive and integrated legislative structure tailored to national contexts and aligned with international obligations, including United Nations Security Council resolutions and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. They stressed that counter-terrorism laws, including criminal justice frameworks, should be reviewed and updated in an ongoing manner to address evolving threats, such as cyberterrorism and links with transnational criminal networks. Participants emphasized the need for policies that balance security measures with civil liberties to uphold human rights. Additionally, they recommended that legal mechanisms provide for effective surveillance, detention, and prosecution of suspected terrorists while ensuring due process and preventing the misuse of counter-terrorism laws.

Participants highlighted the critical role of intelligence and information-sharing in detecting, preventing, and responding to terrorist threats. They advocated for secure mechanisms to facilitate real-time data-sharing among law enforcement agencies, military units, and security services. Proactive monitoring of online platforms, encrypted communications, and financial transactions was identified as a necessary measure to detect emerging threats. Strengthening international partnerships, particularly with organizations such as INTERPOL and United Nations counter-terrorism bodies, was deemed essential in tracking and disrupting terrorist networks across borders. Furthermore, participants emphasized that intelligence operations

must incorporate ethical considerations and data privacy protections to maintain public trust and uphold democratic principles.

Addressing financial tracking and disruption, participants recognized the need to dismantle terrorist financial networks, which rely on donations, money-laundering, and illicit trade. They called for the enforcement of strong anti-money-laundering and CFT measures, ensuring that financial institutions can detect and report suspicious transactions. Establishing specialized financial intelligence units to trace and freeze terrorist-linked assets was also recommended. Participants encouraged increased collaboration between financial institutions, regulatory bodies, and law enforcement to improve monitoring and response mechanisms. They acknowledged that emerging financial technologies, such as cryptocurrencies, present new challenges and require updated regulatory frameworks to prevent misuse.

Participants discussed the evolving threats posed by emerging technologies, noting that terrorists increasingly exploit digital platforms for recruitment, propaganda dissemination, and operational coordination. They recommended that governments and technology companies work together to establish regulatory measures for the swift removal of terrorist content while safeguarding freedom of expression. Enhancing cybersecurity strategies to prevent terrorist hacking of critical infrastructure was identified as a priority. Participants also stressed the importance of monitoring and countering new technologies, such as deepfake videos, encrypted messaging apps, and AI-driven propaganda.

Participants emphasized the necessity of strong international cooperation and multilateralism in counter-terrorism efforts. They encouraged active participation in cross-border intelligence-sharing initiatives and the strengthening of legal frameworks for extradition, joint operations, and prosecution of terrorists. Regional alliances, such as ASEAN and the European Union, were encouraged to work collectively to prevent terrorist activities within and across their borders. The role of international organizations, including the United Nations, INTERPOL, and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), in providing technical assistance and capacity-building programmes for resource-limited countries was also highlighted.

Participants observed that when developing regional strategies, the concept of “minilateralism” could be useful, as fewer Member States with shared threat assessments and challenges may find it easier to reach agreements. In this regard, they noted that the implementation of counter-terrorism strategies is primarily carried out at national and bilateral levels. Participants reiterated that while international agencies and programmes provide valuable support, the ultimate responsibility for implementation lies with Member States. National ownership was emphasized as essential, and participants reaffirmed the need for strategies to be regularly evaluated and adjusted based on Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) principles.

Working group sessions 3 and 5: Lessons learned from developing counter-terrorism strategies

In these sessions, the discussions focused on lessons learned from Member States in developing successive versions of counter-terrorism strategies and involving a wide array of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the process. Participants identified the following key lessons:

- (1) The need for comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies that go beyond a security-driven approach by focusing on addressing underlying conditions of terrorism

During the sessions, it was stressed that a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy must include different pillars that address prevention, response and resilience. In many countries, the development of counter-terrorism strategies came hand in hand with strengthening the military and security response. It was noted that it is important to also develop human, technical and material capacities.

Counter-terrorism strategies must address the root causes of terrorism and put the emphasis on prevention through the engagement of relevant stakeholders involved in education, youth and gender. It was recognized that a socioeconomic response needs to be included in counter-terrorism strategies by looking into the causes, vulnerabilities and fragilities in the society that can foster terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Participants highlighted the need to emphasize anticipation by devoting relevant resources. Income-generating activities for the benefit of the most vulnerable, such as women and youth, were identified as important tools that need to be included in the development of comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies. The construction of infrastructure and the insurance of public services was also outlined to ensure the government's strong presence in affected areas.

The relevance of international cooperation was underlined in the discussions to support harmonization of concepts and a common understanding of counter-terrorism measures in line with international standards. The building of networks is also a way to develop a common understanding of the terrorist threats that is useful in developing counter-terrorism strategies.

- (2) Include governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the process of developing counter-terrorism strategies to ensure a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach

The sessions repeated the now familiar idea that counter-terrorism strategies must go beyond a security-driven approach and reactive measures to implement a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach. While some States have developed a very comprehensive and well-structured document with an ambitious scope, in some cases implementation nevertheless focused mostly on security measures, law enforcement and counter-terrorism operational preparedness. A good balance needs to be found between the prevention-based and security-based approach to ensure proactive sustained prevention efforts.

One of the identified challenges in implementing the whole-of-society approach was conducting meaningful engagement with local authorities and municipalities. It was stated that it was important to engage with local authorities and municipalities early in the process of the development of the strategy to raise awareness of their role in the prevention efforts and detection of risks and vulnerabilities. It is also important to promote the construction of networks with local authorities and municipalities to promote exchange of best practices and capacity-building. Such initiatives can also foster trust between communities and institutions and strengthen social cohesion.

It was also highlighted that civil society is an essential partner at all stages, from the development of counter-terrorism strategies to their implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

Communication is an important aspect of the development of counter-terrorism strategies to ensure the engagement of all relevant actors and facilitate their implementation. To counter the lack of awareness and preparedness of stakeholders, a lot of consultations are needed within national institutions and with civil society. Bridges must be built with the private sector to collaborate on technical topics such as cyber-resilience and countering the financing of terrorism. It was underlined that

communication is essential for ownership of the strategy and to ensure the commitment of local actors. Some participants advised that a communications plan be adopted that aims to create a sense of shared responsibility.

- (3) Ensure monitoring and evaluation and develop capacity-building during the development of counter-terrorism strategies

In developing counter-terrorism strategies, it is important to clearly define key concepts and the vision to be achieved, as well as values and guiding principles of the strategy. Including a data-driven approach in the development of counter-terrorism strategies is a good practice to evaluate community resilience and vulnerabilities.

Participants outlined that many institutions involved in the drafting and implementation were not well equipped with the necessary expertise and knowledge to implement them. Capacity-building activities should be leveraged to develop counter-terrorism strategies to ensure broad engagement and a whole-of-government/whole-of-society approach. Capacity-building projects aim to provide support to develop institutional and judicial reforms and cross-border judicial cooperation. They also aim to develop inter-agency coordination.

The drafting of counter-terrorism strategies needs to also include the drafting of an action plan to define roles and responsibilities among the different institutions. It is important that all institutions are made aware of their responsibilities by defining clear roles. Political commitment to the implementation of the strategy must be ongoing and institutional accountability ensured to constantly affirm the priority of countering terrorism.

While sectoral action plans can prove relevant in the implementation of counter-terrorism strategies, it is important to ensure coherence and a steering structure. A national integrated action plan must be developed with a coordination mechanism.

- (4) The development of counter-terrorism strategies must be a dynamic and ongoing process requiring feedback and adaptation to evolving contexts

Participants stated that counter-terrorism strategies must be tailored to local contexts. They must adopt an evolutive and pragmatic approach to adapt to constantly evolving *modus operandi* of terrorist groups. Counter-terrorism strategies must be evaluated and reviewed to efficiently adapt to the constantly evolving terrorist threat and include lessons learned.

Counter-terrorism strategies must include clearly defined measurable goals that can be assessed through monitoring indicators. Performance indicators need to be developed to evaluate the allocation of human and financial resources necessary for the operationalization of the strategy. In a context of latent and evolving threats, it is important to identify strengths and weaknesses of adopted counter-terrorism strategies to adapt them accordingly. It is essential also to monitor and evaluate the human rights and gender impact of counter-terrorism strategies.

The working groups discussed the need for a rigorous evaluation of the results obtained. An inclusive and forward-looking participatory approach in the evaluation of counter-terrorism strategies needs to include research and academic studies and actors. One challenge identified was to ensure the periodicity of the review and update of counter-terrorism strategies. It is important but challenging to engage relevant stakeholders in that process.

Working group sessions 4 and 6: Lessons learned from implementing counter-terrorism strategies

Participants agreed that terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances and is contrary to democracy, rule of law and human rights and that accountability and justice for victims of terrorism involve ensuring those responsible for terrorist acts are held accountable. Participants recalled also that counter-terrorism strategies should distinguish between terrorism and exercise of the legitimate right of people to resist foreign occupation as duly observed in international law, the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution [46/51](#).

Participants noted several emerging challenges in counter-terrorism, including youth becoming the main target for radicalization, the rapid advancement of digital technologies, and the growing connection between organized crime and terrorist organizations. Participants also shared emerging challenges faced by regional bodies, such as the use of unmanned aircraft systems to carry out terrorist attacks; the ability of terrorists to employ advanced technological methods to evade detection; the growing capacity to plan and finance terrorist activities using the Internet and social media; and the rise in terrorist attacks committed in the name of religion or belief.

The impact of geopolitical situations, conflicts, social trends, and the availability of weapons and finances to terrorists are all interlinked and provide grounds for terrorist recruitment and spread of ideologies. Linking cybersecurity and cyber-resilience as a cross-cutting element in the strategy was recommended. Participants highlighted that reactivity is no longer sufficient; strategies must anticipate new and emerging issues. A combination of kinetic and non-kinetic measures is needed.

Emerging technologies might heighten certain risks but also offer opportunities to scale up prevention and mitigation efforts. There has been widespread concern about the possibilities for AI to scale up personalized recruitment efforts or move individuals along a mobilization pathway by validating narratives and actions that can enable violence.

Participants agreed that facing up to the evolving terrorist environment requires changing our thinking of terrorism and countering violent extremism – threats have become more unpredictable and involve more individuals than in the past. Cooperation with countries of the same region is critical to address spillover and impacts that cross borders – strategies should identify the need to develop relationships with neighbouring countries and the wider region. It was noted that while it is important that strategies are all-encompassing, it is important to understand where efforts should be directed to meet actual needs and current threats.

There are key opportunities to deploy technology to prevent and respond to terrorist threats. One illustrative example is the hash-sharing database that GIFCT manages, through which terrorist content can be given a “digital fingerprint” or “hash” and circulated, helping member companies to identify and act on such content according to their policies. Developing technologies like AI can also support identifying and flagging harmful content.

The working group stressed the important role of the private sector in supporting collaborative international efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism. The risks and opportunities presented by technology, and illustrative examples, underscore the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and public-private partnerships.

Participants outlined several objectives of a counter-terrorism strategy, including ensuring a secure and stable environment; the need for political-level support; eliminating the root causes and motivations for terrorism; preventing terrorist attacks

on citizens, State institutions and infrastructure; preventing the capabilities and various sources of financing of terrorism; stopping and preventing the flow of foreign fighters; controlling international borders; combating ideology and belief that foster violent extremism conducive to terrorism; preventing radicalization; and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

A strategy must address the root causes and drivers into violent extremism and terrorism: unemployment, poverty, political discontent, lack of opportunities, lack of education and health care, social and economic injustice, prolonged unresolved conflicts, aggression, foreign occupation and denial of the right to self-determination.

Beyond individuals, strategies must identify terrorist targets, such as vulnerable targets critical to State functions, as well as open spaces where citizens and tourists gather. Participants noted that strategies should be anchored in sustainability, innovation, and partnerships guiding all activities. Challenges faced include inadequate funding, corruption, regional instability, lack of coordination of security agencies, and the need for increased international support.

Participants recommended including monitoring mechanisms and benchmarks in counter-terrorism strategies. Participants did recognize, however, that this could be a complicated endeavour for a regional counter-terrorism strategy, particularly in terms of identifying who would oversee the results or establish the benchmarks. Participants also noted the need for a clear legal framework to ensure an effective counter-terrorism strategy. It was recommended to incorporate human rights in evaluating the effectiveness and impacts of counter-terrorism strategies.

It was also suggested that a counter-terrorism strategy should be a public document. Participants recommended that national strategies should be living documents, constantly calibrated to adapt to the ever-mutating nature of the terrorism threat. Priorities set in the strategy should be flexible and be adjusted as the threats evolve.

Participants underscored the importance of integrating the private sector into the process, across the full range of pillars, from prevention to response.

Systematic risk management and involvement of external stakeholders, including civil society and independent oversight mechanisms, were agreed to be important elements.

Participants recommended that communications strategies are relevant to counter-terrorism strategies. However, it was recognized that relevant indicators are challenging to develop to measure the success of media and communications strategies, especially in local settings.

Another suggestion was for counter-terrorism strategies to be complemented by clearly defined objectives and related action plans that include specific measures and activities – action plans can effectively address the continually evolving nature of terrorist threats and achieve the strategic objectives of a counter-terrorism strategy.

The topic of resourcing was also addressed, with participants noting that a challenge in creating a counter-terrorism strategy is making sure that individuals with the needed expertise are involved in its development. It was also highlighted that ensuring sufficient funding and personnel is essential for the implementation of a counter-terrorism strategy. The broader topic of funding for counter-terrorism in a country's yearly budget was also discussed, with participants pointing out the complex nature of annual budgets, especially the political aspects of funds distribution among ministries and the competition among various political parties. It was noted that investments must be made to support youth engagement and building their resilience to terrorist indoctrination and recruitment efforts offline and online. Investments must be made to protect vulnerable targets and develop communications strategies.

National counter-terrorism coordination centres can also support cost-effectiveness and resources being allocated according to identified priorities.

Participants recommended integrating human rights expertise in counter-terrorism strategies through inter-agency coordination, institutionalizing human rights specialist capacity through in-house expertise, existing government resources, and external partnerships.

On taking a whole-of-government approach, participants opined that a counter-terrorism strategy that involves and encourages all government entities to act in a coordinated manner is a key foundation. Some good practices shared on government coordination included establishing an interministerial mechanism working on counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism and the creation of fusion cells to ensure that actions and stakeholders are interlinked at all stages.

States that have established national counter-terrorism coordination centres have increased coordinated actions, coherence, and effective implementation of the national strategy by all relevant stakeholders. Importance of a transparent counter-terrorism strategy process to promote accountability and public confidence was emphasized. Actions to strengthen transparency include open processes, clear responsibilities, reporting requirements, internal oversight bodies, and independent accountability mechanisms.

On a whole-of-society approach, participants affirmed the significance of consultations, especially the participation of women, young people, civil society organizations, academia, and religious communities to gain a better understanding of how to prevent terrorism across the various levels of society. The necessity for more effective involvement of civil society organizations in preventing and de-radicalizing (to terrorism) activities was further emphasized. It was stated that opportunities are lost if national and regional strategies do not integrate private sector expertise and experience.

Effective measures must cover both offline and online dimensions, emphasizing multi-stakeholder engagement. It was recognized that no single State or sector alone can address terrorism, and this is also true in the digital space; no single platform or solution is sufficient to address the threats or optimize the opportunities. Platforms such as GIFCT adopt a “one to many” approach that facilitates cross-platform engagement and cross-signal sharing. Cross-platform and cross-sectoral engagement, allowing multiple platforms, companies, and stakeholders to collaborate, will be essential ingredients in national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

Counteracting terrorist narratives and propaganda, community engagement, interfaith dialogues, and initiatives and programmes offered to individuals at risk have proved successful in reducing appeal to terrorist recruitment. Communication between stakeholders is critical, especially after an attack. Increased focus on peacebuilding efforts and social cohesion and building resilience is needed.

Participants expressed an understanding that counter-terrorism strategies may be ineffective if deployed in isolation from neighbouring States. The threat of terrorism has internal and external implications; no country can isolate itself from international events and developments. Public engagements, including reaching broad audiences, media campaigns and more targeted interventions and identification of vulnerable communities, are among actions proven to be effective.

Participants agreed that terrorism cannot be tackled by a single country or entity alone – it requires a unified and collective effort based on regional cooperation, international partnerships, and sustainable policies focused on prevention,

intervention, and rehabilitation. In this regard, regional efforts to counter terrorism have encompassed efforts such as addressing the root causes of terrorism; violent extremism conducive to terrorism; common regional security arrangements; developing and harmonizing legislation, laws and procedures to prevent terrorist organizations from exploiting asylum, immigration and labour laws; and investigating and arresting terrorist suspects (via bilateral security agreements).

On regional counter-terrorism strategies, participants highlighted that a unified, strategic, multidimensional and coordinated approach that extends beyond security measures within a region can be effective in tackling terrorism. A regional counter-terrorism strategy that included a joint plan for action for the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was shared. The success of this regional counter-terrorism strategy was attributed to political will and a general understanding of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Additionally, participants noted that establishing precise mechanisms for intelligence sharing, security coordination, and extradition could be useful in a regional counter-terrorism strategy.

Some examples of regional mechanisms were shared by participants, including a regional convention that addresses the legal dimension related to respecting human rights and the rule of law in counter-terrorism efforts, which can help to ensure that fundamental freedoms are not violated, and a council comprising ministers of the interior that have played a pivotal role in developing joint security strategies. Participants additionally provided instances of cooperation between regional organizations.

At the global level, participants underscored the benefits of increasing cooperation between Member States and the international community, such as building trust; sharing lessons learned; and fostering exchange of information in support of preventing, countering, and prosecuting crimes of terrorism and in designing and implementing national strategies. Participants identified potential areas for international cooperation, including technical programmes, training and capacity-building, strategic planning, human rights, cybersecurity, and repatriation of individuals from conflict areas. Participants also mentioned that cooperation with United Nations entities could facilitate alignment of regional efforts with United Nations counter-terrorism resolutions. Regarding multilateral mechanisms, the session pointed out that it was important to fully implement the Pact for the Future and the New Agenda for Peace.

Working group session 7: Lessons learned from regional counter-terrorism strategies

In addition to earlier presentations and interventions made by regional organizations, during this session representatives of two regional organizations presented regional counter-terrorism strategies, one of which will soon be updated. Another regional organization discussed a regional strategy that is being elaborated and its role in facilitating this process.

Participants agreed that States have the primary responsibility for national security. However, within regions, States tend to face common threats, often of a cross-border nature. It was, therefore, recognized that there are advantages to Member States working together at the regional level. For example, there is a unique feature at the European Union-level that was highlighted in the session, consisting of a shared competence between member States and the regional body in the areas of freedom, justice and security. The European Commission has the licence to act within the

European Union on counter-terrorism issues, which include the development and updating of the regional counter-terrorism strategy, as well as the formulation of regulations, which are legally binding for member States. That approach emphasized the importance of having well-resourced bodies and secretariat within regional organizations for the effective coordination and implementation of regional counter-terrorism strategies.

It was stressed that one of the most valuable aspects that regional organizations offer is their convening power, which allows them to bring together diverse stakeholders to share information and experiences, which in turn is critical for building greater trust and confidence both nationally and regionally. Representatives from regional organizations discussed different examples of dedicated counter-terrorism networks their organizations offer, such as 24/7 networks. In addition, the usefulness of regional judicial and prosecutorial networks in the implementation of regional strategies was noted, as they help to coordinate and exchange information in a swift manner, conduct joint investigations, and provide training, legal and analytical support. These types of platforms build networks between practitioners at the regional level, but also with third party States.

It was also noted how the strong field presence of many regional organizations is helpful to build trust and relations with host governments and acquire local knowledge to better support States in the formulation of strategies and their review. In addition, in the past decades, regional organizations have gained extensive experience in helping their member States in the formulation and implementation of sectoral strategies with counter-terrorism components. This experience could be valuable for the development of comprehensive and integrated strategies at the national and regional levels.

Participants shared lessons learned by regional organizations when supporting their member States in the development of sectoral and/or comprehensive strategies. Participants agreed that regional strategies should be aligned with the rule of law and global norms and frameworks, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Objectives that are measurable should be clearly articulated to facilitate evaluation processes. Panellists noted that although strategic frameworks provide necessary structure for strategies, more agile adjustments might be necessary to be able to address new and emerging threats, evolving ideologies driving terrorism and violent terrorism conducive to terrorism and the impact of the changing geopolitical landscape. Often the modus operandi of terrorists evolves faster than legislative and policy adjustments, making it difficult for institutions to stay ahead of the curve. Besides, a cross-sectoral approach is necessary for countering hybrid threats and protecting critical infrastructure.

Finding the right balance between security and privacy when countering terrorism also remains challenging for Member States. Measures such as access to encrypted communications and data retention continue to generate debate. When considering a whole-of-government approach, both policymakers and practitioners should be involved as each have different experiences and perspectives that need to be considered and integrated into counter-terrorism strategies.

Finally, participants agreed that strategies should be policies of the State, not of the Government that develops them, and continuity is important.

Working group session 8: Lessons learned from engaging civil society in the development and implementation of counter-terrorism strategies

Participants shared a wide range of responses on the nature, scope, and scale of engagement by civil society during development and implementation of national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.

With regard to the inclusion of civil society, some existing strategies recognize the importance of civil society actors in the development and implementation processes, while in others the role of civil society remains more limited. A primarily security sector driven approach with regard to counter-terrorism strategies can limit meaningful civil society involvement. It was highlighted that civil society engagement should not be limited to so-called softer aspects of counter-terrorism, but civil society should be involved in the full spectrum of interventions.

Regarding the scope of strategies, it was mentioned that some strategies are narrowly focused on security and criminal justice measures, while others have adopted a broader approach, including preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism efforts. The extent to which respect for human rights and gender perspectives have been integrated varies as well.

The challenge of building trust between Governments and civil society was mentioned, also in relationship to, for example, the potential abuse of non-profit organizations in terrorism financing. The United Nations can play a role in facilitating and strengthening trust between civil society and Governments and promoting inclusive policymaking at national and regional levels.

It was highlighted that limited accessibility to national counter-terrorism strategies can limit engagement. In some instances, strategies were not released by the Government for public consultation and feedback and in other occasions, organizations were consulted very late in the process or not enough, or civil society expertise on field-based realities was not reflected comprehensively in national strategies.

In Member States where civil society organizations were integral to the implementation process, they brought a range of expertise. Furthermore, civil society organizations experience some implementation challenges, including insufficient funding for their initiatives, limited technical capacity among smaller organizations, security concerns for organizations operating in conflict contexts, and frequent disconnect between national strategies and local implementation.

An overview was provided of challenges faced by civil society in engaging with governments and some good practices were also shared in this regard. It was highlighted that the root causes of terrorism need to be addressed comprehensively to further understand the motivations and mechanisms of terrorist groups. Furthermore, the engagement with civil society and government should employ a conflict transformation approach, recognizing terrorism as a component of a broader conflict ecosystem.

The key role communities can play in countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism was highlighted. A participant provided examples of programmatic interventions in the community, including on rehabilitation and reintegration issues, that aimed to build resilience and provide counter-narratives to address potential radicalization to violence and recruitment, including through online forums. In this regard, developing community-based early warning and early response

systems showcased the value that civil society organizations could bring to the government and strengthen their partnership.

On the range of civil society and other stakeholders involved, the value of involving diverse stakeholders and adopting a whole-of-society approach in the development and implementation of strategies was highlighted, with good practices from Member States cited in this regard. This can ensure impartiality and accountability in the process.

A participant highlighted that strategies must be adapted to local realities, ensuring that policies are informed by contextual knowledge and insights, rather than applied in a one-size-fits-all approach. It was also noted that governments must work directly with civil society, community and religious leaders, and the private sector to ensure that all perspectives are taken into account, enhancing the overall effectiveness and relevance of counter-terrorism measures. When diverse stakeholders are visibly committed to a strategy, it creates whole-of-society momentum. To ensure that strategies are forward-looking and up to date with the current threats, governments should establish strong non-governmental partnerships.

The informal and inconsistent nature of engagement was highlighted, where consultations have no established institutional mechanisms. Effective implementation of strategies requires institutional frameworks that facilitate meaningful collaboration between governments and civil society. Diversifying engagement mechanisms can improve diversity and can support smaller civil society organizations to participate effectively. Institutionalized mechanisms can also ensure regular and structured consultations, regardless of external funding cycles.

With regard to the protection of civil society, the risk of unintended consequences of counter-terrorism laws and measures was highlighted. There are examples that the misuse of these laws and measures have restricted civic space. Transparency and accountability were considered key elements for mitigating these risks and enhancing effectiveness of existing counter-terrorism strategies.

While select Member States have made some strides in integrating human rights principles and gender into the development and implementation of counter-terrorism strategies, challenges persist and there is an opportunity for progress. Participants mentioned civil society actors facing harassment and intimidation, and this can erode trust between governments and civil society.

A participant noted that centralizing human rights principles in counter-terrorism implementation reinforces accountability and operational change. The importance of independent oversight mechanisms to support strategies, which would ensure that counter-terrorism measures uphold the rule of law and remain transparent, accountable, and rights-observant, was highlighted. These mechanisms also build public trust.

Terrorism, violent extremism conducive to terrorism, and abuses arising from counter-terrorism measures continue to impact women and girls disproportionately. Sexual and gender-based violence constitutes one of the means through which terrorist organizations indiscriminately target civilians. Despite its prevalence, gender-based violence perpetrated by terrorist groups remains inadequately addressed in policy frameworks.

Closing and conclusions

At the concluding plenary, rapporteurs from each working group presented summaries of the main themes and key ideas discussed in their sessions. The summaries provided

above reflect these presentations and discussions. For a comprehensive understanding of the ideas shared, the original presentations should be consulted. Throughout the Conference, presentations, interventions, and rapporteurs' reports were submitted to the secretariat, serving as the foundation for the formulation of the non-binding Valletta Principles on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies. These Principles were also shaped by additional contributions from participants who were unable to attend in person, which are included in the compilation document.

The Bogotá Principles, along with subsequent discussions and revisions by United Nations entities within the Global Compact Working Group on National and Regional Strategies, as well as a series of workshops held with civil society organizations prior to the Conference, also informed the discussions, the agenda, presentations, and the Valletta Principles.

The Principles were introduced to the participants by the Chair of the Working Group on National and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategies. Together with this summary of discussions and the compendium of presentations and interventions delivered by participants, these documents collectively constitute the official record of the Valletta Conference.

At the closing session of the Conference, CTED reiterated its appreciation to the Government of Malta for its leadership in convening this vital dialogue. CTED also thanked the representatives of Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society, and academia for their valuable contributions and insightful interventions, which helped to shape the Valletta Principles. In response, Malta expressed its gratitude to CTED for the partnership in organizing the Conference and committed to further promoting the Valletta Principles to assist Member States in preventing and countering terrorism through comprehensive and integrated national and regional counter-terrorism strategies.
