The Permanent Missions of Qatar, Japan, Belgium, Nigeria and Canada to the United Nations, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

“Protecting Our Future: A Priority for All”
High-Level Launch of the UNODC Roadmap on the Treatment of Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups

Friday 7 June 2019
09:30–12:00
UNHQ – Conference Room 11

High-Level Segment
- H.E. Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN;
- H.E. Koro Bessho, Permanent Representative of Japan to the UN;
- H.E. Marc Pecsteen, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN;
- H.E. Prof. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the UN.

Expert Panel
- Ms. Alexandra Martins, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UNODC;
- Judge Raja AbiNader, Head of the Prison Administration, Ministry of Justice of Lebanon;
- Dr. Jehangir Khan, Director, UN Office of Counter-Terrorism/Counter Terrorism Centre (UN OCT/CCT);
- Ms. Brigid Kennedy Pfister, Senior Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF;
- Ms. Sharon Riggle, Chief of Office/Chief of Analysis and Outreach Unit Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict;
- Mr. Chris Harland, Deputy Permanent Observer and Legal Adviser, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Moderator: Ms. Simone Monasebian, Representative, UNODC New York Office.

We welcome interventions from the floor during the interactive session. Kindly RSVP to Mr. Matteo Pasquali (pasquali@un.org)
**HIGH-LEVEL EVENT OBJECTIVES**

1. **Launch the “UNODC Roadmap** on the Treatment of Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups;
2. **Discuss challenges faced by Member States** in dealing with children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups;
3. **Raise awareness on the role of key actors** in promoting measures aimed to: *i*) prevent child recruitment by terrorist and violent extremist groups; *ii*) provide appropriate treatment to children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups; and, *iii*) promote the rehabilitation and the reintegration of those children, and in particular those who are deprived of their liberty and who are affected by the FTF phenomenon;
4. **Gather political support by UN Member States** in the dissemination and further implementation of measures aimed to tackle the phenomenon;
5. **Discuss enhanced cooperation** at national, regional and international level with Member States.

**A UNODC TRAINING PACKAGE**

Four training tools aimed to provide guidance to Member States. Developed under the UNODC Global Programme on Violence against Children

- **Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Violent and Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System.**
- **Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Groups: The Role of the Justice System.**
- **Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Child Victims of Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups.**
- **Justice for Children in the Context of Counter-Terrorism.**
CHALLENGES

In the past years, the international community has been confronted with the recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist and violent extremist groups. This phenomenon is closely connected to, and overlaps with, the longstanding practice of child recruitment and use by armed groups, brought to global attention over 20 years ago by the Machel Report.\(^1\) However, the technological advances and strategic specificities of terrorist and violent extremist groups pose different challenges today to Member States in trying to combine effective prevention and other responses to violence perpetrated against children, while also providing adequate accountability mechanisms to uphold the rule of law.

The phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), defined as individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflicts,\(^2\) poses considerable challenges to Member States. In this context, children affected by the FTFs phenomenon and children born to or accompanying FTFs, are of growing concern to Member States. Children born in the conflict zones from parents with different nationalities are often at risk of statelessness, due to lack of proper documentation, documentation that is not recognized, and/or nationality laws that do not allow the mother to pass her nationality to the child. In several cases, children are currently detained and face prosecution on charges under counter-terrorism legislation, even for association with these groups through familial ties. Many of them are being held in adult prisons or in administrative detention. The degree to which the specialized juvenile justice system is involved in the criminal justice response to children alleged to have committed terrorism-related offences varies greatly. Children allegedly recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups are at enhanced risk of experiencing stigmatization and secondary victimization upon apprehension and while in contact with national authorities, or when returning to their families and communities of origin.

These challenges are at the heart of the new development agenda, which incorporates, peace, justice and robust institutions. Goals 5, 8, 11, 16 and 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),\(^3\) call for a comprehensive approach in dealing with violence against children as an integral part of ensuring global development.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306 and Add.1).


\(^3\) UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (A/RES/70/1).

UNODC’S ROADMAP

UNODC provides technical assistance to requesting Member States on the treatment of children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups. UNODC recognises the duty of Member States to protect society, and in particular children, from the threats associated with terrorism and violent extremism, in accordance with international law. Thanks to the generous contribution of the Government of Japan, UNODC has developed a Roadmap on the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups.

The Roadmap is the result of 3 years of technical assistance work by UNODC to Member States that are affected by this phenomenon. It was developed under the framework of a Japan-funded initiative and counted on the substantive input of representatives of the following 10 countries: Bangladesh, Iraq, Japan, Lebanon, Morocco, Maldives, Nepal, Philippines, Tunisia, and Sri Lanka. The Roadmap also draws on the work of UNODC and Member States in other regions of the world including West and East Africa. It builds upon the twofold mandates of UNODC in the areas of violence against children and counter-terrorism, as well as on an increased understanding of the challenges and promising practices in this area. The Roadmap aims to achieve an enhanced system-wide coherence that supports national priorities and needs. It encompasses issues related to the identification of the international legal framework applicable to children who are associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups from their initial contact with national authorities, using as a benchmark relevant provisions of international human rights law, international criminal law, international humanitarian law and international law regarding counter-terrorism.

The Roadmap addresses the treatment of all children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups, regardless of the different types or methods for association and recruitment and of the different purposes for which the child has been used by the group. It also advances comprehensive and holistic guidance to prevent these children from coming into contact with these groups; rehabilitate and reintegrate them when they are involved or otherwise affected by these groups; and ensure that there is an effective justice for children system in place within this context. It is envisaged that these are measures that can be taken by Member States and other key stakeholders, such as International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations, working together to deal with the issue of child recruitment and exploitation.

UNODC’S KEY RESPONSES

1. Efforts should be addressed to prevent child association with these groups;
2. Children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups should be primarily considered and treated as victims of crime, and such consideration leads to the need to protect, respect and fulfil the rights of all child victims regardless of their involvement in criminal activities as alleged offenders. Great efforts must be addressed to prevent secondary victimization of these children;
3. When children are alleged as, accused of or recognised as having committed a terrorism-related offence, they are entitled to all rights established by international law in relation to juvenile justice, with no exception or derogation due to the nature of the offence committed; and,
4. The key objective of any action taken in relation to all children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups should be to promote their rehabilitation and reintegration.