



# A Regional-Global Paradigm for Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

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**Abstract:** *Trans-national and cross-border threats posed by terrorism have led a significant number of regional organizations to become more involved in countering this menace. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which emphasises its implementation at the regional level, has laid the groundwork for an emerging regional-global paradigm as an implementation framework of the Strategy. Putting the Strategy into the broad context of the maintenance of international peace and security, the article starts by examining the delivery of peace and security as a regional public good, and how implementation of the Strategy can contribute to such endeavours. The article then analyzes the regional implications of the Strategy by detailing regional actions on supporting and implementing it while recognizing that the levels of commitment and resources, priorities accorded, and capacities available to implementation vary from region to region. This is followed by an analysis of the comparative advantages, complementary functions, and limits of regional organizations as well as their existing engagement with the United Nations on implementing the Strategy. The subsequent analysis of the engagement of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force with regional organizations leads to the author's envisaging of a regional-global paradigm for implementing the Strategy*

**Keywords:** *Regional-global paradigm, United Nations, counter-terrorism, Strategy, regional organizations.*

## Introduction

In recent years, an increasing number of regional organizations have made tackling terrorism one of their security priorities. The trans-national and cross-border nature of terrorism operations has

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made improved regional cooperation and enhanced regional capacities a necessity. Combating terrorism has also been considered an area to build synergy by some regional organizations in consolidating political wills and strengthening substantive security cooperation. In addition, counter-terrorism provides a window of opportunities for an emerging regional-global paradigm to advance international peace and security. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (hereafter, the Strategy), which was unanimously adopted by 192 member states in September 2006, has assigned a strong role to regional organizations in a comprehensive global framework and plan of action on counter-terrorism, with nine provisions specified for regional and sub-regional organizations<sup>1</sup> (see Annex 1).

Enhancing international counter-terrorism cooperation through the participation of regional organizations has been addressed by only a small number of scholarly studies, most of them limited to analyzing counter-terrorism challenges and activities in a particular geographical region. This article attempts to fill this vacuum through examining regional contributions to global counter-terrorism efforts, particularly by exploring the role of regional organizations in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The analysis of the comparative advantages and complementary functions of regional organizations as well as their existing engagement leads to the conclusion that the Strategy's emphasis on implementation at the regional level merits greater efforts to raise awareness of the Strategy as well as a strong commitment to implementation by regional organizations. Equally importantly, an emerging regional-global paradigm on counter-terrorism could set a model for interaction between international and regional organizations for delivering the global goods of peace and security, and portends its potential role in the future of global governance.

### **Delivering Peace and Security at the Regional Level**

Regional security complex theory (Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver) holds that security is a regional phenomenon, since most threats travel more easily over short distances than long ones. Indeed, in a globalized world, it would be difficult to comprehend the security dynamic of one country without inserting it into a broader regional context and without grasping the conflicting or cooperative patterns that defines the external policy of that country with its neighbours.<sup>2</sup>

The same is true of the peace agenda, which goes hand-in-hand with security. One distinctive characteristic of the lack of peace is insecurity – the presence of threats, dangers and incidents, as a classic Chinese dictionary explains “security” in terms of “no danger”, “no threat”, and “being free of incidents”.<sup>3</sup> And security is defined as primarily concerning the management of threats.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rodrigo Tavares, “Understanding Regional Peace and Security: a Framework for Analysis”, *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2008, p. 107-127.

<sup>3</sup> *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* (A Modern Chinese Dictionary), Shangwu yinshuguan, 3rd. revised edition, 1996, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Rodrigo Tavares, “Understanding Regional Peace and Security: a Framework for Analysis”, *Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2008, p. 107-127.

The United Nations and regional organizations are and should be partners in the endeavour to advance international peace and security. In drafting the United Nations Charter, the founders already envisioned a role for regional organizations in this regard. Chapter VIII of the Charter states that Members of the United Nations shall make every effort to achieve the pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council (Art. 52.2). It adds that the Security Council shall, where appropriate, utilize such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority, but that no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without Security Council authorization (Art. 53.1).

Global and regional deliveries of peace and security are not only a must but also a matter of complementarities. The value regional organizations add to the global spectrum includes their transcendence of the geographic and political limitations of state-centrism, their close-to-home understanding of peace and security challenges and the enabling factors of such challenges, their better grasp of local dynamics, and their quicker delivery of results on the ground, given the cultural coherence, fewer diverse interests, potentially easier information-sharing, etc. within the region, all of which are factors that reduce obstacles in mobilizing collective actions.

In October 2005, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1631, which for the first time outlined a coherent guideline for enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, thus recognizing their growing contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council debate in November 2007 on the role of regional organizations in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts underlined their importance in peacekeeping, peace-building, the fight against terrorism and illicit weapons, and other collective efforts. The debate emphasized that the growing contributions made by regional and organizations in cooperation with the United Nations can support the maintenance of international peace and security.

Given the magnitude and diversity of regional organizations, the extent of their mandates on and involvement in addressing security issues also varies. The European Union, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Organization of American States (OAS), and the African Union (AU) all have specific mandates and historical experiences to address security issues. Others, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Inter-Governmental Authority (IGAD), the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), have also addressed security issues, though they were formed as regional economic organizations. Still others, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Asia Regional Forum (ARF) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), are relatively newer organizations with some experience in security affairs, whose mandates include addressing security issues. Other established regional organizations, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the League of Arab States (LAS, or Arab League), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have dealt with security issues sporadically.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> S. Vasu Vaitla, "Regionalism and Regional Organizations: An option for more effective and more democratic global governance", Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies

Counter-terrorism is one of the deliverables of peace and security from the regional level. When UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed Harvard's John F. Kennedy Forum in October 2008, he highlighted that, in the pursuit of the common good, it is essential to address a set of global challenges that hold the key to our common future – countering terrorism among them, in addition to ensuring global financial stability, addressing climate change, advancing global health, and ensuring non-proliferation and disarmament.<sup>6</sup> Most recently the Secretary-General reiterated to more than 80 national counter-terrorism focal points that terrorism is a global challenge that requires a global, integrated response.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, terrorism remains one of the major threats to international peace and security. It has been long recognized by both the UN Security Council and General Assembly that the suppression of acts of international terrorism is essential for the maintenance of international peace and security. Therefore, counter-terrorism is and should remain an integrated part of the global goods deliverable for the advancement of peace and security.

In September 2006, the UN reached an important milestone with the General Assembly's unanimous endorsement of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The adoption of the Strategy by 192 member states symbolized the consensus to address the threat of terrorism as a global peace and security challenge. This success in adopting a global framework and plan of action on counter-terrorism, an issue that had been stifled by decades of political debates, has been attributed to the way the Strategy proposes a balanced, holistic approach to counter-terrorism between addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, law enforcement, security, and human rights. The Strategy is multi-pronged: In addition to traditional security and law enforcement priorities, the Strategy resolves to undertake measures aimed at addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, including but not limited to prolonged unresolved conflicts, the dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, the lack of the rule of law accompanied by violations of human rights, ethnic, national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, socio-economic marginalization, and lack of good governance, while recognizing that none of these conditions can excuse or justify acts of terrorism.<sup>8</sup> As guided by the Strategy, effective counter-terrorism efforts have to be pursued as part of the global peace and security agenda.

Besides being significant in being integrated the broad context of international peace and security, the Strategy is also distinctive in assigning a clear role for regional organizations in implementing the Strategy. Given that the maintenance of security has traditionally been regarded as a national issue, and that perceptions of terrorist threats and responses to them are usually shaped by domestic concerns, it is not surprising that terrorism, though a major threat, does not

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Association, Town & Country Resort and Convention Center, San Diego, California, USA, 22 March 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, *Speech at the John F. Kennedy School of Government on "Securing the Common Good in a Time of Global Crises"*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 21 October 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, message to the Counter-Terrorism Focal Point Meeting, delivered by Jean-Paul Laborde, Special Advisor to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the United Nations, Vienna, 13 October 2009

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

seem to be necessarily correlated to the regional dimension, and remains primarily at the national and bilateral levels. However, the delivery of global public goods, including counter-terrorism, can only be enhanced through effective delivery at the regional level. It has been argued that directly or indirectly, both the origin and target of this threat has a regional dimension, and therefore coping with it should be considered a regional public good.<sup>9</sup> Also, it has been recognized that the struggle against terrorism is at times at the very core of regional organizations' activities – they have adopted normative or quasi-normative instruments such as conventions, protocols, plans of actions, and various pragmatic initiatives have been adopted at the regional level.<sup>10</sup>

Broadly speaking, regional mechanisms should be considered part of the reform process of global governance on peace and security. This examination of regional roles for implementing the Strategy also intends to explore the emergence and development of a new regional-global paradigm for advancing international peace and security.

### **Regional Implications of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy laid out a national-regional-global paradigm as an implementation framework. While recognizing that the primary responsibility for implementation lies with member states, the Strategy underlines the need for collective action at the regional level, particularly through the efforts of regional and sub-regional organizations.

In particular, the Strategy encourages regional and sub-regional organizations to mobilize resources and expertise, create or strengthen counter-terrorism mechanisms or centres, improve border and customs control, share best practices in counter-terrorism capacity building, and increase information-sharing at the national, regional and international levels. Implementing these provisions does not simply mean obligations for regional and sub-regional organizations, but also allows them the opportunity to leverage on a global platform the rich resources associated with it in order to advance their own counter-terrorism programmes.

For the past three years-plus since its adoption, the Strategy has gradually gained recognition, support, and endorsement by various regional bodies. In November 2007, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which works on the basis of a comprehensive concept of security, issued a ministerial statement supporting the Strategy. The statement recognized the leading role of the United Nations in international efforts against terrorism and expressed support for the Strategy, which it said provides guidance for OSCE counter-terrorism activities. The statement particularly commended the Strategy's comprehensive global approach towards countering terrorism by addressing not only its manifestations, but also the conditions conducive to its spread, within a framework based on human rights and the rule of law, and

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<sup>9</sup> Rodrigo Tavares, "Understanding Regional Peace and Security: A Framework for Analysis", *UNU-CRIS Occasional Papers* 0-2005/17.

<sup>10</sup> Giuseppe Nesi (ed.), *International Cooperation in Counter-terrorism: The United Nations and Regional Organization in the Fight Against Terrorism*, Ashgate, England and USA, 2005, p xii.

committed support to the OSCE Secretariat's work to promote the Strategy's implementation.<sup>11</sup> It is believed that OSCE's substantive expertise and knowledge, as well as the advantage of field presence and natural political platform were assets for a comprehensive response to terrorism through the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.<sup>12</sup>

The European Union has repeatedly reiterated its call to maintain the Strategy's authority and redoubled its efforts to fully implement the four pillars of the Strategy, exemplified by both domestic initiatives and technical assistance projects with third states by EU Member States. The EU also has showed its commitment to implementation of the Strategy by welcoming contributions by the United Nations, and by offering political and substantive support to the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), and by inviting CTITF to the EU Council Working Party on Terrorism (COTER) in Brussels for sharing of information on implementing the Strategy.

The Council of Europe (CoE) has committed to facilitating implementation of the Strategy by providing a forum for discussing and adopting regional standards and best practices and by providing assistance to its member states in improving their counter-terrorism capabilities. In September 2008, the CoE participated in the United Nations Secretary-General's Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism in New York. In underlining one of the CoE's priority counter-terrorism actions – supporting victims – in relation to the Strategy, the CoE stressed that constant improvements are needed to the forms of assistance available to victims and that the development of new, innovative approaches is therefore imperative.

In Asia, the *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation* (APEC) has recognized the important role played by the UN and its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It stressed that terrorism poses a direct threat to APEC's vision of secure, open and prosperous economies. At the 17<sup>th</sup> APEC summit in November 2009 in Singapore, APEC leaders re-emphasised the Strategy and stressed the need for its implementation, where applicable.

Member states of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) have time and again reiterated their call for further strengthened and coordinated efforts in implementation of the Strategy. The 7th Asia-Europe Conference on Counter-Terrorism, held in Manila, the Philippines in June 2009, recognized the United Nations' leading role in the fight against terrorism and reaffirmed its support for the Strategy. While emphasizing the primary responsibility of states to implement the Strategy, the conference recognized that the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and other international, regional and sub-regional organizations and fora play a key role in the dissemination of best practices in implementation of the Strategy.

Members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have confirmed their efforts to maintain the central coordinating role of the United Nations in the global fight against terrorism, and to steadfastly implement the Strategy. This commitment was reiterated at the at the SCO

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<sup>11</sup> Ministerial statement on supporting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 30 November 2007.

<sup>12</sup> "OSCE and U.N. Avenues of Cooperation in Implementing the U.N. Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy", Jean-Paul Laborde, Special Advisor to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of the United Nations, statement at the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, Vienna, 23 June 2009

summit in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 28 August 2008. The series of meetings co-planned by the United Nations Regional Centre for Central Asia on implementation of the Strategy in Central Asia, set to culminate with a ministerial conference in 2010, was commended by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as an excellent vehicle for building the relationship between the United Nations and SCO.<sup>13</sup>

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 149<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 28 August 2008, requested that the AU Commission, together with its African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), work closely with the United Nations in pursuit of the Strategy. Ministers of justice of member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa, in a September 2007 statement, requested that IGAD member states implement the Strategy. Discussions have been undertaken in the continent on improving African awareness and understanding of the Strategy. For example, it was recognized that, in order to maximize the impact of the Strategy on the continent, implementation of the Strategy must take into account local and sub-regional contexts, with African institutions and other stakeholders including assuming key roles. Africa's sub-regional economic communities also need to be empowered and develop a stronger voice on issues of terrorism. In addition, terrorism must be addressed against a broader background by taking into consideration many other complex security challenges facing Africa.<sup>14</sup>

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has supported a consensus in the UN General Assembly on implementation of the Strategy. In November 2007, the OIC's Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) co-organized with the government of Tunisia an international conference on "Terrorism: Dimensions, Threats and Counter-Measures". Addressing the conference, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commended the initiative as "giving life to the Strategy", as it calls on people to make full use of the role which regional and other organizations can play in the global endeavour to counter terrorism.<sup>15</sup>

The Arab League Council, at its summit in March 2007, reaffirmed its support to the United Nations on counter-terrorism, and emphasized the importance of recommendations in the Strategy. Consequently, the League of Arab States (LAS, or Arab League) formed an expert team to follow up and implement the Strategy at the Arab level, with a particular emphasis on addressing conditions that promote the spread of terrorism.

The role of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States (OAS/CICTE) on implementing the Strategy was re-affirmed at a ministerial conference on international cooperation against terrorism in March 2007 co-organized by the OAS. At the

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<sup>13</sup> Message of Ban Ki-moon to the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), delivered by B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation, on 15 June 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Discussion at an experts group meeting on "African Perspectives on International Terrorism", organized by the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, 3-4 June 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Ban Ki-moon, Address to the International Conference on Terrorism: Dimensions, Threats and Counter-Measures, 15 November 2007, Tunisia.

conference, an appeal was made to the United Nations and other relevant international, regional and sub-regional organizations to implement the Strategy at the international, regional and sub-regional levels, including the mobilization of human and material resources. Addressing the OAS/CICTE in March 2009, the chair of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee commended the OAS/CICTE's counter-terrorism endeavours and highlighted the important role of regional organizations in implementing the Strategy, as regional organizations, including the OAS/CICTE, are instrumental in developing tailor-made implementation initiatives, including coordinating with other stakeholders in the region and relevant United Nations entities. They provide capacity-building assistance, in partnership with the UN and international organizations, with special attention to the needs and priorities of the region. They also promote the ratification and implementation of regional and sub-regional counter-terrorism instruments in support of the universal legal framework and related counter-terrorism initiatives.<sup>16</sup>

The above is a long yet non-exhaustive list of regional organizations that have endeavoured to implement the Strategy and their relevant actions. It is evident that the commitment level, resources allocated, priorities, and capacities vary from region to region. Instead of being considered disadvantages to implementation at the regional level, such unevenness should be regarded as both a reality and impetus for us to be more sensitive in adopting region-tailored approaches to implementing the Strategy as well as to be more reasonable in assessing the implementation in different regions. The fact that implementation efforts are absent in certain regions by relevant regional organizations should also serve as a reminder to explore means to fill these gaps.

### **Implementation of the Strategy: Why Do Regional Organizations Matter?**

The strengths of regional organizations lie in their substantive expertise, knowledge of a particular region, field presence, and political platform. They provide a resource that has not been used enough by the United Nations system to the greatest advantage of countries all over the world. Specifically for implementation of the Strategy, regional organizations can contribute in terms of: 1) developing region-tailored implementation strategies, timetables, and evaluation plans; 2) mobilizing political will and support in fulfilling implementation commitment by regional governments; and 3) facilitating cross-regional assistance and cooperation so that regional organizations that have developed expertise and experience can provide support to those still developing these capacities.

The common objectives that exist in the regional-global paradigm on counter-terrorism include the following – all in accordance with implementation of the Strategy: 1) improving implementation by member states of relevant resolutions, universal treaties, instruments, legislation, and sanctions regimes; 2) complementing and ensuring the sustainability of regional

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<sup>16</sup> Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador Neven Jurica, permanent representative of Croatia to the United Nations, March 4, 2009.

capacities on counter-terrorism; 3) ensuring an integrated and coordinated response to provide technical assistance and proper prioritization of technical assistance; avoiding duplication of efforts and increasing the impact of technical assistance; and 4) garnering political support and momentum in member states for counter-terrorism efforts.

The existing arrangements in this regional-global paradigm, which contribute to implementation of the Strategy, can be broadly categorized as follows:

1. Information-sharing: This includes exchanging technical assistance matrices, identifying capacity needs and gaps as well as best practices for technical assistance delivery, conducting joint country visits, and jointly assessing terrorist threats. For example, the Monitoring Group of the 1267 Committee (sanction committee of Al-Qaida and the Taliban) makes common assessments of the regional/sub-regional threats from Al-Qaida-related terrorism with regional and sub-regional organizations to ensure that they do not enter into contracts with listed individuals or entities in any way that would contravene the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanction measures. In addition, as mandated by General Assembly Resolution 54/110, regional and intergovernmental organizations have submitted information to the secretary-general for his annual report “Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism”.

2. Capacity-building: This includes organizing training programmes, workshops, seminars and study visits, supporting the development of databases, conducting joint projects, programmes and field exercises, and assisting member states, through regional organizations, in fulfilling their obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions or in becoming party to and implementing the universal instruments against terrorism. One excellent example is that the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has developed regional counter-terrorism model laws in compliance with the universal legal instruments against terrorism, held sub-regional technical assistance and training workshops, and collaborated with regional and sub-regional organizations in the implementation of its global project on “Strengthening the Legal Regime against Terrorism”.

3. Outreach and Liaising: This includes establishing regional offices and training centres. Such arrangements include aviation security training centres of the International Civil Aviation Organization, Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament of the Office of Disarmament of the United Nations, and Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style Regional Bodies.

4. Engagement with civil society: This includes involvement with regional and sub-regional political, cultural, faith-based, trade-related, and media organizations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example, works with regional and sub-regional professional media and press freedom monitoring organizations to maintain a healthy debate on professional standards in reporting on terrorist activities.

In achieving the aforementioned objectives and arrangement of the regional-global paradigm, some UN entities and special agencies are still shaping their interaction and cooperation with regional organizations; some already have had successful experiences. To mention just a few, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime’s (UNODC) partnership with the OSCE and OAS has been regarded as exemplary cooperation. They systematically jointly conduct training seminars, workshops, ministerial conferences and technical assistance missions. The participation of regional organizations in the country visits of the *Counter-Terrorism Committee* Executive Directorate

(CTED) have contributed insight and thus given the host countries a more constructive evaluation for better-targeted delivery of technical assistance. The *International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)* also benefits from working with regional organizations in terms of having member states become aware of and participate in conventions on the physical protection of nuclear materials.

Nevertheless, such a regional-global paradigm must also overcome a number of challenges in reaching their objectives and ensuring positive interaction. The main challenges include:

1. Further strengthening of political will: Counter-terrorism issues may not be high on the political agenda of some regional organizations, and concerns about encroachments on sovereignty and the diversion of resources sometimes incur resistance. For example, UNESCO faces certain obstacles in convincing authorities (national and/or local) to take action in curriculum reform and textbook revision based on the results of collaborative research.

2. Ensuring provision of resources: Some regional organizations lack human and financial resources for counter-terrorism activities, as counter-terrorism represents a small part of their overall mandates. This leads to uneven counter-terrorism capacity across regions (currently strongest in Europe and weakest in Africa and Asia) and results in underutilized potential and missed opportunities for rallying resources, expertise and contacts. For example, some regional organizations lack the resources to participate in CTED country visits. On the flip side, many UN entities and special agencies also do not have sufficient resources to engage with the vast contingent of regional organizations.

3. Further improvement of coordination: Coordination among regional organizations is sometimes inadequate, resulting in duplication and the waste of already scarce resources. Other difficulties include: the diversity of relevant actors and institutions, geographic overlap between some organizations, different working methods (e.g. some organizations have a broad mandate to examine various aspects of counter-terrorism, while others adhere to strict and extremely detailed methodological criteria in focusing on one specific area), and the need to ensure that institutional coordination initiatives do not create disproportionate resources demands on participating institutions.

4. Further enhancement of information exchange: The exchange of information between regional organizations and the United Nations is limited. For example, it was difficult for the CTED to obtain access to country profiles and analyses of terrorist threats and assessments of compliance, because much of the data was confidential. After all, identifying and arresting terror suspects are eminently clandestine efforts led by intelligence agencies and domestic security services.

5. Ensuring continuity: Cooperation with regional organizations has been mostly project-based and not systematic. The involvement of regional organizations therefore has more than often been sporadic and fragmented.

To marshal the advantages and minimize the disadvantages, an optimal structure of the regional-global paradigm for implementing the Strategy must be developed.

### **Regional Engagement of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force**

Often regional organizations wonder how to interact effectively with global organizations such as the United Nations. At the same time, the UN wonders how to systematically engage regional entities, which are very often substantively different. One vehicle through which a comprehensive regional-global paradigm on counter-terrorism surrounding implementation of the Strategy can be established is the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF).

The CTITF was established in 2005 by the Secretary-General to enhance the coordination and coherence of counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations system. Over time, the Task Force, composed of 26 United Nations Systems entities<sup>17</sup> plus the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), has participated in CTITF activities on catalyzing UN system-wide and value-added initiatives to support member states' efforts to implement the Strategy in all its aspects. This range of experience represented by the CTITF members allows the United Nations to address terrorism as part of its broader mission to promote development, human rights, and peace and security. It also promotes synergies and information-sharing, and allows each entity to maximize its comparative advantage.

Members of the Task Force contribute to UN counter-terrorism efforts according to their specific organizational mandates. In addition, the Task Force has identified some cross-cutting areas of work where implementation of the Strategy requires cooperation across several system entities, where the United Nations can provide added value, and where there is a geographically broad-based demand for assistance from member states. Specific initiatives include preventing and resolving conflict, supporting victims of terrorism, protecting human rights while countering terrorism, strengthening the protection of vulnerable targets, countering the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, tackling the financing of terrorism, protecting and responding to WMD terrorist attacks, countering the appeal of terrorism, and integrated assistance for countering terrorism, etc.

So far, the positive dynamic of the CTITF has been central to advancing the counter-terrorism agenda within the United Nations system. While continuing to aim for the deepening of the partnerships that have been formed within the system, the CTITF is actively seeking to expand and strengthen partnerships between member states, the United Nations system, regional and other organizations, and civil society on implementing the Strategy, including the CTITF's potential to

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<sup>17</sup> These 26 entities include: Al-Qaeda/Taliban Monitoring Team, Counter-terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Department of Public Information (DPI), Department of Safety and Security (DSS), Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), Expert Staff of 1540 Committee, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA), Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), World Customs Organization (WCO), World Bank (WB), and World Health Organization (WHO).

provide an interface with regional organizations on coordinated engagement at the regional level on implementing the Strategy.

As a starting point of forging new partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations through the global counter-terrorism strategy, the issue of counter-terrorism was introduced for the first time in September 2006, on the agenda of high-level meetings between the UN Secretary-General and regional and intergovernmental organizations. Assistant Secretary-General Robert C. Orr, then chair of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), briefed the heads of regional and sub-regional organizations on the Strategy. At the briefing, many of the regional representatives welcomed the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and expressed willingness to cooperate with the UN in implementing the strategy, building upon many existing activities. Some of them specifically mentioned that the United Nations could engage regional organizations as the entry point to help states build capacities in counter-terrorism, including streamlining and fulfilling reporting obligations, providing assistance on legal drafting, ratification and implementation of the international instruments, and filling gaps in implementing relevant Security Council resolutions.

A regional-global paradigm is taking initial shape through sporadic involvement of regional organizations in CTITF activities, through various kinds of analyses, exercises or engagements:

1) Mapping exercises as a starting point for potential cooperation. For example, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (DPA), which is the UN's focal point for the secretary-general's high-level meetings with intergovernmental organizations, has put together a mapping of counter-terrorism activities by respective regional organizations.<sup>18</sup> The CTITF, in consultation with its participating entities, also put together a matrix on various CTITF entities' engagement and cooperation with regional organizations.<sup>19</sup> The CTITF also developed a UN Counter-Terrorism Online Handbook<sup>20</sup> which centralized and disseminated information on UN system counter-terrorism activities as well as relevant information on regional organizations.

2) Building partnerships in regional initiatives. Various CTITF initiatives are factoring regional organizations into their partnership-building endeavours. For example, the UN/DPA is embarking on a project in Central Asia together with the European Union and the European Commission on regional implementation of the Strategy, through the DPA's leadership in the CTITF Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution. A number of regional organizations, including the EC, OSCE, SCO, NATO, CIS, and CST, would be expected to participate in and make contributions to the process. The CTITF Working Group on Protecting Human Rights While Countering Terrorism also aims to bring together relevant stakeholders at the regional level to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences through the organization of regional workshops.

3) Sharing of experiences and best practices. Regional expertise on thematic matters at times can be useful to relevant CTITF activities. For example, in assisting the Secretary-General in

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<sup>18</sup> Document in file.

<sup>19</sup> Document in file.

<sup>20</sup> Available at: <http://www.un.org/terrorism/cthandbook/>.

convening a symposium on supporting victims in September 2009, the CTITF Working Group on Supporting Victims also benefited from the OSCE experience on supporting victims through, for example, the concrete results of the OSCE High Level Meeting on Victims of Terrorism in September 2007. Various CTITF projects also have involved regional organizations in the brainstorming of their activities. For example, experts from the OSCE participated in a stakeholder meeting of the CTITF Working Group on Countering the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes in November 2008, which discussed the nature of the threat represented by use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, and the most appropriate means for dealing with it. The CTITF Working Group on Strengthening the Protection of Vulnerable Targets has worked extensively with regional organizations such as the CICTE, OAS, EC and OSCE in its applied research work on public-private partnerships (PPPs) for the protection of vulnerable targets from terrorist attacks.

### **The Way Forward: A Regional-Global Paradigm for Implementing the Strategy**

In order to establish systematic and comprehensive cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the fight against global terrorism, it is important to seize the opportunity to implement the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by fully utilizing existing cooperation mechanisms between the UN and regional organizations.

The initial evolution of such a regional-global paradigm should aim for: 1) promoting broader, balanced, and systematic cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations through developing a coherent, coordinated approach; 2) ensuring that implementation of the Strategy becomes a more prominent part of the work programme of regional organizations, raising awareness as well as ensuring allocation of sufficient resources and enabling necessary capacity-building; 3) increasing information flow between the UN and regional organizations about each other's programmes, operations, and plans.

There are several layers in the regional-global paradigm – ranging from strategic planning to concrete plans of action:

1) Mainstreaming counter-terrorism, within the framework of the Strategy, in the cooperation priorities between the United Nations and regional organizations. This could be achieved by establishing a component of implementing the Strategy in the further evolution of the Secretary-General's high-level meetings with regional organizations.

2) Enhancing cooperation mechanism between the CTITF and regional organizations. The potential mechanism should aim to convene an annual meeting with regional organizations. The inaugural meeting should aim to achieve: 1) identifying key officials in various regional organizations dealing with counter-terrorism, and accordingly establishing focal points in these organizations with the CTITF, and 2) creating a channel of effective information-sharing between the CTITF and regional organizations. In this way, the CTITF could take the first step in meeting the expectation that it serves as a strategic interface between the United Nations and regional organizations on the Strategy, and eventually use its convening authority to bring regional

organizations together to share best practices and assess implementation in each region and sub-region.<sup>21</sup>

3) Establishing appropriate modalities through which the United Nations can work with regional organizations to promote timely and effective responses to terrorist threats on the ground. This can be achieved through a thorough mapping of the expertise of relevant regional organizations and all participating entities of the CTITF, and the matching, combination, and joint application of these resources, all based on their comparative advantages.

4) The United Nations should encourage and facilitate dialogue and cooperation among regional organizations on implementing the Strategy. Such closer cooperation may not only enable more collective delivery of counter-terrorism activities at the regional level, but also facilitate cross-regional capacity-building. One example was highlighted in CTITF message to the ASEM Conference on Counter-Terrorism on 22-23 June 2009 in Manila, saying that, as the main multilateral channel for communication and dialogue between Asia and Europe, one particular merit for ASEM is to facilitate cross-regional assistance and cooperation so that global, regional and sub-regional bodies that have developed expertise and experience can provide assistance to those still developing related capacities. Other cross-regional forums that could serve this purpose include the Asia-Africa Forum, East Asia-Latin America Forum, etc. The exact model of comprehensive regional organization cooperation on counter-terrorism still has yet to emerge, but some inspiring ideas include establishing a network of regional counter-terrorism focal points, or the OSCE proposal that regional organizations unite into an “Alliance of Regional Organizations in Combating Terrorism”.<sup>22</sup>

It is hoped that, with the gradual evolution and eventual maturity of a regional-global paradigm for implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, a model of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to advance peace and security can thus be set.

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<sup>21</sup> Eric Rosand, Alistair Millar, Jason Ipe, and Michael Healey, “The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Regional and Subregional Bodies: Strengthening a Critical Partnership”, Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation paper, October 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Raphael F. Perl, head on anti-terrorism issues, OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit, “Building Stronger Partnership to Prevent Terrorism”, Washington, 8 October 2009.

## **ANNEX**

### **The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Provisions relating to regional organizations**

1. To encourage relevant regional and subregional organizations to create or strengthen counter-terrorism mechanisms or centres.

2. To step up national efforts and bilateral, subregional, regional and international cooperation, as appropriate, to improve border and customs controls in order to prevent and detect the movement of terrorists and prevent and detect the illicit traffic in, inter alia, small arms and light weapons, conventional ammunition and explosives, and nuclear, chemical, biological or radiological weapons and materials, while recognizing that States may require assistance to that effect;

3. To take advantage of the framework provided by relevant international, regional and subregional organizations to share best practices in counter-terrorism capacity-building, and to facilitate their contributions to the international community's efforts in this area;

4. To encourage relevant specialized agencies, relevant international, regional and subregional organizations and the donor community, to develop States' capacities to implement relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. To encourage the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate to continue to improve the coherence and efficiency of technical assistance delivery in the field of counter-terrorism, in particular by strengthening its dialogue with States and relevant international, regional and subregional organizations and working closely, including by sharing information, with all bilateral and multilateral technical assistance providers;

6. To continue to work within the United Nations system to support the reform and modernization of border management systems, facilities and institutions at the national, regional and international levels;

7. To encourage the United Nations to work with Member States and relevant international, regional and subregional organizations to identify and share best practices to prevent terrorist attacks on particularly vulnerable targets;

8. To consider becoming parties without delay to the core international instruments on human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law, and implementing them, as well as to consider accepting the competence of international and relevant regional human rights monitoring bodies;

9. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism should continue to support the efforts of States and offer concrete advice by corresponding with Governments, making country visits, liaising with the United Nations and regional organizations and reporting on these issues.

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