



14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Kyoto, Japan
10 March 2021

***SPECIAL EVENT
ON
THE UNODC ROADMAP ON THE TREATMENT OF CHILDREN
ASSOCIATED WITH TERRORIST AND VIOLENT EXTREMIST
GROUPS***

Wednesday 10 March 2021

PROGRAMME

This High-Level event is co-sponsored by the European Union (tbc), and the Governments of Iraq (tbc), Japan (confirmed), Nigeria (tbc) and Indonesia (confirmed).

Opening remarks

UNODC ED's participation (tbc)

Speakers

High Level Representatives from the EU, Iraq, Japan, Nigeria and Indonesia

Moderator

Alexandra Martins, Coordinator UNODC Global Programme to End Violence against Children

SPECIAL EVENT OBJECTIVES

1. Present the *UNODC Roadmap on the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups*;
2. *Outline the work that has been carried out by UNODC*, thanks to the generous support of the Government of Japan, under the Global Programme to End Violence against Children in this area of work;
3. Present *STRIVE Juvenile: Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups*;
4. Discuss challenges faced by Member States in dealing with children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups;
5. Raise awareness on the role of key actors in promoting measures aimed to: *i) prevent recruitment of children by terrorist and violent extremist groups; ii) 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 Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) phenomenon; and, iii) provide appropriate treatment to children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups*;
6. Gather political support from UN Member States in the dissemination and further implementation of measures aimed to tackle the phenomenon.

BACKGROUND – THE CHALLENGES

Children are often among the casualties of acts of terrorism and are victims of abduction, trafficking, and sexual and gender-based violence by designated terrorist groups. In recent years, the international community has been increasingly confronted with the recruitment and exploitation of children by terrorist groups. This phenomenon is closely connected to, and overlaps with, the longstanding practice of child recruitment and use by armed groups that was brought to global attention over 20 years ago by the Machel Report.¹ At present, the recruitment and exploitation of children are perpetrated by a variety of groups all over the world, making this a **truly global issue**.



It is important to note that while the nature and gravity of violence against these children may vary, its short- and long-term implications are severe for both children and society as a whole. The consequences of this violence can be devastating and amounts to a serious form of violence against children, impacting not only their physical development, but also their cognitive, emotional and psychological development and wellbeing.

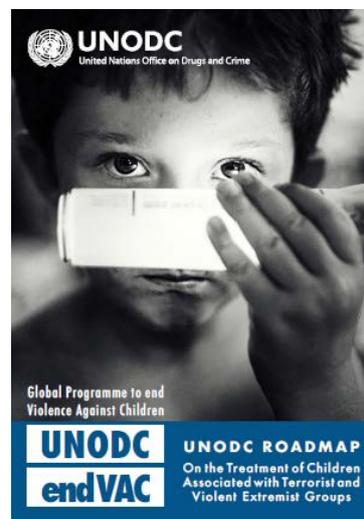
Furthermore, the technological advances and strategic specificities of terrorist groups have made instances of recruitment more difficult to detect, recruitment campaigns broader, and have also made children associated with such groups more vulnerable to stigma and discrimination. The cross-border nature of terrorist activities, highlighted by the latest wave of individuals who travelled abroad to join designated terrorist groups, adds another dimension that impacts children. The FTF phenomenon, 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

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

training, including in connection with armed conflicts,² poses considerable challenges to Member States. In this context, children affected by the FTF phenomenon and children born to or accompanying FTFs, are of growing concern to Member States.

On the one hand, children born in conflict zones from parents with different nationalities are often at risk of statelessness, due to a 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. On the other hand, the degree to which the specialized juvenile (child) 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.



The defeat of ISIL in Syria has placed the issue of children affected by the FTF phenomenon at the centre of the international agenda and has highlighted the lack of common approaches to address this critical issue. At the same time, this is a global phenomenon which extends further than only one group, and that requires comprehensive and courageous responses at international and national levels.

These challenges are at the heart of the 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

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. UNODC's work, based on its experience as a technical assistance provider and thanks to the generous contribution of the Government of Japan, aimed to advance policy reform in this area through issuance of the UNODC *Roadmap on the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups* (UNODC Roadmap).

The UNODC Roadmap is a result of the lessons learnt over more than four years of technical assistance delivery in this area. It was elaborated under the framework of a Japan-funded initiative and through the contribution of experts in child rights and in counter-terrorism, coming from ten different 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 mandates of UNODC in the areas of

² United Nations Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 2178*, adopted by the Security Council on 24 September 2017 (S/RES/2178 (2014)).

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

⁴ *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System*, (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017) at 16.

violence against children and counter-terrorism, as well as on increased understanding of the challenges and promising practices in this area.

The *UNODC Roadmap* identifies 10 overarching principles for ensuring a coherent, system-wide approach to the problem. At the core of the approach, there is recognition that preserving public safety and protecting child rights are complementary objectives that have to be pursued concomitantly in order to achieve long-lasting peace.

The *UNODC Roadmap* addresses the treatment of all children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups, regardless of the different types or methods for their association or recruitment as well as the different purposes for which the child has been used by the group. **The *UNODC Roadmap* also summarizes relevant guidance for action in the areas of prevention; rehabilitation and reintegration; and, justice responses, by proposing selected recommendations.** It is envisaged that these are measures and recommendations that can be taken by Member States and other key stakeholders such as International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations, working together to tackle the issue of child recruitment and exploitation.

In doing so, the *UNODC Roadmap* acts as a manifesto, intended to promote an integrated approach to the treatment of these children, recognizing that preserving public safety and protecting child rights are two complementary objectives that should be pursued concomitantly in order to achieve long-lasting peace and security. It also serves as guidance to countries to overcome the challenges associated with this phenomenon and builds on “what works” at the global and national level when confronting the situation of these children. Its key objective is to guide UNODC’s provision of technical assistance in this area, as well as the effective and sustainable interventions by Member States.

The *UNODC Roadmap* was launched and presented in June 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York and in July 2019 at the African Regional High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism in Nairobi, Kenya, respectively. In March 2020, UNODC co-organized with the Government of Indonesia the High-Level Event on *Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The UNODC Roadmap in Action*, which took place in Indonesia, benefitting Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives and the Philippines. The main purpose of the event was to gauge political willingness to recognize and adopt the *UNODC Roadmap*. Indonesia expressly endorsed the Roadmap through the “*Bali Call for Action*”. This was further supported by the Maldives, which requested to become a pilot country for its implementation. Various countries affected by the phenomenon expressed interest in and willingness to use the *UNODC Roadmap* as policy guidance at the national level and to address efforts to implement it with the support of UNODC.

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) 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**;
- 4) When children are alleged as, accused of or recognized 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.**

STRIVE Juvenile

STRIVE Juvenile: Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups is a three-year (2021-2024), €5 million EUR initiative by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) being implemented in three countries: The Republic of Indonesia, Republic of Iraq and Federal Republic of Nigeria. The project aims to partner with the selected countries for the development and implementation of comprehensive national responses to prevent and counter violent extremism affecting children, in full respect of human rights, gender equality and international law.

The project assists governmental authorities and civil society organizations in targeted, innovative and demand-driven interventions: sustaining effective strategy and policy development, legislative review and harmonization, capability development, and regional and trans-regional cooperation. The project reaffirms that preventing and responding to violence against children by terrorist and violent extremist groups is of the highest importance for the EU and the UN as a whole.

These interventions ultimately aim to achieve:

- 1) Improved government strategies, policies and mechanisms related to child recruitment and exploitation by terrorist groups; and,
- 2) Increased resilience of vulnerable children against terrorist groups agendas.

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