

Security Council Ministerial Briefing on Foreign Terrorist Fighters

29 May 2015

Concept note

In September 2014, the Security Council, at a Heads of Government-level Security Council Summit chaired by U.S. President Obama, adopted resolution 2178 (2014) to respond to the acute and emerging threat posed by Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs). In the seven months since the Summit, much has been accomplished by member UN Member States, the United Nations, and other international, regional, and sub-regional organizations to counter the FTF threat. However, recent studies and assessments indicate that the flow of FTFs into conflict zones still continues and more needs to be done to address this phenomenon.

Lithuania will host a Security Council Briefing attended by Interior Ministers (or their equivalents) to assess how far the international community has come since September 2014 to counter the flow of FTFs into conflict zones. **The goal of this session will be to identify concrete priority actions to implement fully resolution 2178 (2014).** This meeting will be the first time that the Security Council has met in the format of Interior Ministers (or their equivalents). The unique format recognizes the critical role that Interior Ministries (and related government offices) must play in responding to this complex threat to international peace and security.

FTFs: A Continuing Threat

As the Security Council noted last year, the problem of terrorists traveling to foreign conflicts is not new, but the threat has become grave and continues, with an unprecedented flow of fighters and facilitation networks fuelling multiple conflicts worldwide, such as in Iraq, Syria, Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, and elsewhere. Latest reports indicate that there are now over 25,000 known FTFs from over 100 countries who have travelled to join or fight for terrorist entities associated with Al-Qaida, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

FTFs not only exacerbate existing conflicts as observed in many conflict zones today, they can return home possessing new skills and connections, increasing the threat of homegrown terrorist attacks, which the international community has already witnessed in the recent past. And not only are FTFs a threat today - terrorist networks forged in the conflicts of today could pose a threat for decades to come.

Resolution 2178 (2014), a landmark response to this threat, provided a comprehensive framework for the international community's response. Since the Security Council Summit on FTFs in September 2014, Member States have rapidly responded, including to adopt appropriate laws and regulations to deal with FTFs within their territories, as well as take necessary measures to prevent FTF transit across borders and address the violent extremism that fuels this phenomenon. International and regional organizations have also adopted new frameworks and protocols to guide their members on how to implement resolution 2178 (2104) and enhance sub-regional, regional, and international coordination and cooperation. But more must be done to mobilize additional resources and technical expertise needed to build the appropriate infrastructure, processes, and mechanisms and employ them to effectively prevent and counter

the movement of FTFs, especially among the most affected origin, transit, neighboring and destination states.

Priority Actions to Implement Resolution 2178 (2014)

This Security Council Ministerial Briefing would highlight the principal challenges Member States face in implementing the core provisions of resolution 2178 (2014): adopting new domestic laws to criminalize the travel, financing, recruitment, and facilitation of FTFs; countering the flow of FTFs through improved border security, information collection and sharing; countering recruitment and facilitation; and increasing and enhancing international cooperation through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms.

Security Council Interior Ministers (or their equivalents) would then focus on tangible steps that Member States and the international community should take as a matter of priority to implement fully this important resolution. Such steps may include: improve legal frameworks for criminalization of offenses, strengthen border management, better use law enforcement tools, share FTF travel information, and marshal resources and expertise to the most affected states to further build their capacity and provide technical assistance. With a focus on implementation and execution, the Security Council should provide more concrete direction to the international community on how to comply with the obligations found in resolution 2178 (2014) and what enforcement and preventative actions should be taken to have greater impact, while at the same time respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

Furthermore, the Security Council should encourage even closer cooperation between its principal counterterrorism expert bodies -- the Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and the 1267 Al-Qaida Sanctions Monitoring Team (MT) -- and the Counterterrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) on this issue. These bodies should harmonize efforts to deliver strategically needs-based capacity building assistance to the most affected states as expeditiously as possible. To this end, CTED and the MT should share its relevant analyses with CTITF to jointly develop a counter FTF capacity building assistance plan to be implemented in the near future and identify additional donors and implementers who may be able to assist Member States with complementary or supplementary assistance to build needed capabilities and expertise.

Thematic Session

To frame the Security Council discussion on May 29, the Secretary-General will brief on the current scope of the FTF problem, its effect on current conflicts and the UN's efforts to address it. The Chairs of the 1267 Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and the 1373 Counterterrorism Committee will then brief the Security Council on their efforts in this field, including what the MT and CTED have assessed on the FTF threat and what more needs to be done. The Secretary General of INTERPOL will also brief on INTERPOL's efforts to counter the flow of FTFs including assistance and services provided to member states.

The Interior Ministers (or equivalents) of Security Council members would then be invited to speak. Council members may wish to address:

- Their views on **priority actions** that must be taken in the short term to implement fully resolution 2178 (2014) and counter the FTF threat;

- Experience with creating new laws or adapting existing ones to criminalize FTF travel, recruitment, and facilitation and how they employ them for law enforcement activities;
- Challenges they face in securing their borders against FTFs and prosecuting individuals who seek to join terrorist organizations, as well as lessons learned and solutions found;
- Obstacles faced and/or solutions discovered to collect and share needed FTF and traveler data within and across borders to improve FTF monitoring and interdiction efforts;
- Areas in which they may have special capacity and expertise to assist others improve criminalization, border security and information collection/analysis/sharing; and
- Views on the ability of the UN system, regional and subregional organizations to bolster state capacity to counter the movement of FTFs.

The adoption of a Security Council Presidential Statement that would encourage states to take certain actions to implement resolution 2178 (2014) is foreseen at this session.