

UNITED NATIONS



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**USG's Opening Remarks to the
UN Chiefs of Police Summit (UNCOPS)
3 June 2016**

Distinguished Ministers and Chiefs of Police,
Fellow panellists and other participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon

It is my great pleasure to be here with you today. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and particularly Police Division, for organising such an important event – which comes at an extremely important moment in time.

The security environment in which the United Nations operates has changed significantly: we are subjected to direct threats in an ever more complex and a continually changing environment; and the Organisation is increasingly being asked to operate in more dangerous and challenging locations.

Globally, the UN fulfils a range of different mandates, from humanitarian assistance to developmental support, from facilitating political processes to establishing peace and security and protecting civilians and their human rights.

In this deteriorating security environment we are experiencing a challenging dichotomy: whilst we, the United Nations, in cooperation with its Member States, are working hard to address the underlying causes of conflict and instability, we are also increasingly being targeted by the very hostile elements that are part of the conflict.

The United Nations plays an important role in promoting and encouraging political resolution of conflicts. Lines between military, political and humanitarian activities are increasingly blurred, posing additional threat to humanitarian activities and workers.

While some of the work of the United Nations is focused on finding political solutions to conflicts, hostile elements do not make any distinctions between humanitarian efforts and these peace and security mandated tasks.

In other words, while we are a part of the solution, we are also increasingly at risk because of this role.

But what are those underlying factors that create an environment conducive for terrorism and that allow organised crime to prosper?

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States already subject to conflict, emerging from conflict or transitioning from authoritarian rule often struggle to institute good governance because the system of rule of law has been abrogated, law enforcement has given way to military deployments or a security vacuum, and security service resources and attention are focussed on gaining or returning to power and away from terrorism and organised crime.

Societal factors also contribute to creating an environment vulnerable to extremist sentiment and ideology. These include strongly engrained religious, tribal, and societal divides; poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities.

There are also national security factors such as porous borders, easy access to weapons, the absence of effective import and export controls; poorly regulated or unforced legal restrictions to counter trafficking, poorly developed or funded security services and corruption.

Corruption in particular can be catastrophic – not only does it pervert the rule of law; it hampers economic development; undermines democracy; discourages foreign direct investment, and it undermines people’s confidence in governments and can allow terrorists and criminal organisations to operate with impunity.

Terrorist groups and organised criminal networks have exploited and manipulated these underlying factors to their advantage. They are using conflicts and weakened states to achieve their own objectives.

The upshot is that there is now a complex interaction between armed conflict, terrorism, and the organised global criminal trade in illicit goods (drugs, people, arms, and counterfeit currency) – with each one feeding off the other: the line between criminals and hostile groups is increasingly blurred; criminal groups are exploiting transnational conflicts and using terrorist tactics; terrorist groups are financing themselves through illegal smuggling of weapons, people, natural resources and drugs; violent extremists and criminal gangs are sharing trafficking routes and joining forces for specific activities that are mutually beneficial; traditional terror groups are exploiting local political conflicts and organized crime to further their objectives.

By way of examples, in parts of the Sahel, where overlapping threats of armed conflict, insurgency, terrorism and organised crime are prevalent, large areas are left without an effective State presence.

Increased fragmentation of armed groups renders the security situation all the more complex, fluid, volatile and prone to rapid changes.

Harsh climatic conditions, vast sparsely populated areas, epidemics, droughts, food insecurity, lack of development and economic growth, and a lack of infrastructure all combine with a number of weaknesses in terms of governance capacities, ill equipped defence and security services, military coups and armed rebellions, creating vulnerabilities.

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These vulnerabilities become opportunities for non-state armed groups, creating a breeding ground for criminal, extremist or rebel groups to emerge.

In South Asia, the illicit drug business is a “conflict resource”: terrorist groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda affiliates - are fuelled by the country’s huge opium trade.

Narcotics trade has transformed — through deepening ties between insurgents and drug traffickers — the nature of the insurgency from one based on ideology to one increasingly driven by profit. Insurgent commanders from the district level to the top leadership have expanded their involvement in the drug trade.

Taliban and other extremist groups use drug trade profits to recruit and pay cadres, acquire weapons and equipment, and bribe officials.

In South America, although huge strides were made in improving the security situation in recent years, armed groups and criminal networks continue to be involved in an extensive range of activities including drug production and trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering, extortion and illegal mining and have often resorted to terrorist tactics to achieve their objectives.

This complex and challenging security environment has impacted the United Nations. In the past ten years the United Nations has lost 179 civilian men and women to acts of violence. 1,121 have been injured.

From 2009 to mid-2015, 123 United Nations civilian personnel were killed as a result of violence, of which 30 died from terrorist attacks.

In 2015 alone, 34 United Nations peacekeepers were killed as a result of malicious acts, the vast majority in the Central African Republic and Mali. So far this year 24 peacekeepers have been killed as a result of malicious acts, including 11 in Mali in the month of May alone.

Non-United Nations humanitarian losses were also high: from January 2014 to June 2015, 92 personnel of Non-Governmental Organisations, working in close cooperation with the United Nations, lost their lives as a result of acts of violence, 84 were injured in similar circumstances and 167 were abducted.

It is not known how many targeted attacks were avoided through the disruption of a threat entity's targeting or planning cycle – largely thanks to the efforts of many colleagues in this room.

In addition to the tragic loss of life, UN programme delivery can be severely affected by direct terrorist attacks against the UN which has a compounding effect.

The presence of the United Nations and its work is contrary to the objectives of global terrorist organisations and organised criminal networks.

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While some of the work is focused on finding political solutions to conflicts, terrorists group do not make any distinctions between humanitarian efforts and peace and security mandated tasks.

The entire Organisation and all its personnel are viewed as a legitimate target.

In spite of the challenges, the work of the United Nations continues. The very nature of this work in development, humanitarian, and peace and security underpins global security.

The work of the United Nations is crucial to combatting the conditions and circumstances which foster the very existence of terrorism and organised crime.

This work includes eliminating the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, through dialogue and conflict prevention.

Through the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law, and an increased focus on development, combating poverty, working on youth unemployment, and providing livelihoods for marginalized groups.

As we continue, jointly, to address the underlying causes of conflict and instability, we will continue to be exposed to direct and collateral threats from hostile groups.

The UN will continue to rely on your support to protect its personnel and enable the delivery of the crucial humanitarian, development, human rights, international law and peace and security programmes to those who are in greatest need.

Thank you