



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

3 February 2017

Excellency,

I have the honor to transmit the attached letter by which the Secretary-General has requested an informal meeting of the General Assembly in order to allow him to consult Member States on the strengthening of the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced manner, as requested in paragraph 70 of A/RES/70/291.

Following this request, I intend to call for an informal meeting on Thursday 9 February 2017, in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, at 10 AM.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson'.

Peter Thomson

To All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Dear Mr. President

3 February 2017

I would be grateful if you could kindly schedule an informal meeting of the General Assembly in order to allow me to consult Member States on the strengthening of the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced manner, as requested in paragraph 70 of A/RES/70/291:

“...requests the Secretary-General to review, in consultation with the General Assembly, the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States, upon their request, in implementing the Strategy in a balanced manner, including by strengthening cooperation with other international and regional organizations and improving the mobilization of resources necessary for capacity-building projects, with a view to providing concrete suggestions to the Assembly in this regard, by May 2017, for consideration by the Assembly during its seventy-first session;”

This informal meeting will help me to prepare my report for the General Assembly's consideration. Please find enclosed background documents for circulation to Member States in preparation.

Following the meeting and as part of the consultative process, it is also my intention to request written inputs from Member States with regard to the provisions of paragraph 70 of A/RES/70/291.

I look forward to finding a mutually convenient date and time to hold this informal meeting of the General Assembly as soon as possible.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

*with my warmest personal
regards*

António Guterres

His Excellency
Mr. Peter Thomson
President of the General Assembly
New York

UN Office of Counter-Terrorism

Proposal:

The creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), reporting to the Secretary-General and headed by an Under-Secretary-General (USG). The USG would serve as the Coordinator of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and Senior Advisor to the Secretary-General on Counter-Terrorism. He/she would, on behalf of the Secretary-General, coordinate counter-terrorism related activities across the UN system by leading the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF).

Responsibilities of the USG:

- Serve as the senior official in the UN Secretariat responsible for counter-terrorism advocacy, coordination, capacity-building assistance to Member States, and other activities. Promote a balanced, effective implementation of the GA-approved Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy across all four pillars contained in the Strategy.
- Chair and lead the CTITF, with its 38 UN and non-UN members and its thematic working groups, to bring stronger coherence into the counter-terrorism related activities carried out by CTITF members.
- Serve as Executive Director of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), the primary counter-terrorism capacity-building unit within the Secretariat.
- As a member of the Secretary-General's senior leadership team, participate in meetings and discussions to ensure counter-terrorism issues are taken into account in analysis and decision making, given terrorism's devastating impact on UN work across all pillars and on many Member States.
- With the increasing number of high-level non-UN fora focused on counter-terrorism (including, inter alia, the Shanghai Cooperation Council's Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure, the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, etc.), represent the Secretary-General and raise the UN's profile at multilateral and national events focused on counter-terrorism. Establish a UN "profile" or "brand" on counter-terrorism.
- Advocate through participation in high-level events, media outreach, and other means the need for Member States to implement and comply with Security Council resolutions and international conventions on countering terrorism.
- Expand the donor base and resources available for the UN's counter-terrorism activities, given that the UNCCT's capacity-building programs are supported entirely through voluntary contributions. Establish a sustainable financial basis for UN counter-terrorism work.
- Lead the UN's Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda, keeping it firmly rooted within the four-pillar UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Ensure that PVE activities are truly "value-added" in terms of counter-terrorism goals.

Resources required:

Existing: The current staff of the CTITF office (which serves as the Secretariat of the CTITF), including the D-2 Director, as well as the existing staff of the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre would be separated from the Department of Political Affairs and moved a stand-alone Office of Counter-Terrorism led by an Under Secretary-General, reporting to the Secretary-General.

The existing CTITF /UNCCT staffing is funded in part by regular budget resources, but most positions are supported by voluntary funds deriving primarily from the grants provided by Saudi Arabia (\$110 million over several years). Of the current staff, six (including the D-2 Director) are funded from regular budget resources and 29 (including the D-1 Deputy Director) and a junior professional officer (JPO) are funded from extra budgetary resources.

New: Additional regular budget resources would need to cover the new USG position and Special Assistant to the USG.

Organization:

Currently, consistent with the GA legislative mandate creating the Centre, the UNCCT is located within the CTITF office. Thus, staff members in many cases, including the D-2 Director, work on both UNCCT and CTITF-related issues. Separating the CTITF office and UNCCT, which could in theory reinforce the division of labor between support for the new USG's work on coordination (CTITF office) and his/her work on capacity building with member states and regional organizations (UNCCT), is probably undesirable in practice, given that voluntary contributions accrue to the UNCCT but not CTITF, and, as noted above, most existing positions derive from extra-budgetary funding.

Legislative issues to consider:

Given existing General Assembly mandates, GA approval is needed to shift the CTITF office and the UNCCT from DPA, and the proposed USG/head of OCT would need a legislative mandate to facilitate ACABQ and Fifth Committee support for the modest additional resources needed. Paragraph 70 of the 1 July 2016 GA resolution re-endorsing the Global CT Strategy "requests the Secretary-General to review, in consultation with the General Assembly, the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States, upon their request, in implementing the Strategy in a balanced manner . . . with a view to providing concrete suggestions to the Assembly in this regard by May 2017, for consideration by the Assembly during its seventh-first session." The requirement for consultation was added to this consensus resolution by Member States who wished to exercise influence on the Secretary-General's recommendations in terms of counter-terrorism architecture. Yet the urgent imperative to bring coherence and momentum to the UN's counter-terrorism work requires acceleration of these consultations well ahead of the May report, with the objective to create the OCT as early in 2017 as possible (drawing from Unforeseen Funds in advance of Fifth Committee-approved funding for the USG and front office).

Relations with CTED:

The Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, headed by an Assistant Secretary-General appointed by the Secretary-General with the concurrence (via "silent procedure") by the Security Council, provides sensitive analysis to the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee. CTED is one of the 38 members of the CTITF. Moreover, CTED, CTITF, and UNCCT are mentioned together in several GA and Security Council Resolutions. Thus, the channels for communication and coordination exist. But the proposed USG for Counter-Terrorism would not have supervisory responsibilities over CTED: OCT would report through the Secretary-General to the GA, whereas CTED reports to the Security Council.

Cost Estimate for UN Office of Counter Terrorism (in USD)	
Total estimated Staff costs 2017 as is:	6,191,027
Total Costs of New Posts - Regular Budget (annual)	573,800
USG	393,000
P3 Special Assistant	180,800
Total projected operational budget 2017 (non-staff costs from existing funds)	15,243,414