Function before form: optimising the UN's counter-terrorism architecture

Independent expert assessment prepared for the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Counter-terrorism

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June 2022

Contents

Abbreviations

CSO	civil society organisation
C/PVE	countering/ preventing violent extremism
CT	counter-terrorism
CTED	Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate
CTITF	Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force
CVE	countering violent extremism
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (of the UN)
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
GA	General Assembly (of the UN)
(7th) GCTS	(seventh edition of the UN) Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy
HRDDP	Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
KPMG	Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund (of the UN)
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office (of the UN)
PVE	preventing violent extremism
RC	Resident Coordinator
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG	Secretary-General
SR-HRCT	Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism
UN	United Nations
UNCCT	UN Counter-Terrorism Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOCT	UN Office of Counter-Terrorism
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSG	UN Secretary-General

Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

The seventh iteration of the United Nations' (UN) Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) requested the Secretary-General to report on three interconnected core issues:

1. **Oversight and effectiveness** – options for enhancing the effectiveness of and for monitoring and evaluating UN counter-terror efforts, and better integrating the rule of law, human rights and gender issues.
2. **Appropriate funding** for the integrated and balanced implementation of the strategy, including elements on prevention and human rights, and to deliver on the mandate given to the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in 2017.
3. **Grant-making** – should UNOCT gain the authority to make direct grants and payments to implementing partners, and if so, how should this work?

This paper provides an independent view on these three issues, together with relevant recommendations, to assist the Secretary-General, member states, United Nations (UN) officials and other experts to think them through.

The UN has enormous potential to assist in tackling the persistent threat posed by terrorism and the conditions that give rise to it. However, there are **widespread concerns** over the direction and performance of the UN on counter-terrorism issues, related to the risks of:

- reinforcing overly militarised and securitised counter-terrorism responses
- neglect for prevention, peacebuilding and human rights
- undermining and misappropriating the UN's core values in the service of repression
- inclusion, empowerment and accountability deficits
- tokenistic integration of commitments to advance gender equality
- incoherence
- weak oversight, performance and risk management

Questions of oversight and effectiveness, budget and finance, and grant-making responsibilities must be considered in light of, rather than separately from, these significant concerns.

The report provides an overview of the complex, evolving capacities, standards, procedures and initiatives that currently provide **oversight, performance and risk management** across the hundreds of programmes, projects and activities currently being implemented by the UN's counter-terrorism architecture.

In particular, the long-standing neglect of a human rights-based approach to UN counter-terrorism efforts is compounded by the fact that – 16 years into the implementation of the GCTS, and with counter-terrorism-related human rights abuses prevalent in all regions of the world – the UN is still, in its own words, gathering only 'limited information' on whether GCTS outcomes related to human rights are being achieved.

Meanwhile, there are enormous risks of the UN compounding harm and doing reputational damage, given extensive UN security capacity building efforts in contexts with high levels of human rights abuse. Human rights due diligence, 'do-no-harm' monitoring and lessons-learning are of the utmost importance.

A step-change is therefore needed in the oversight, results orientation and risk management of all UN counter-terrorism related activities. A model for oversight of the UN counter-terrorism architecture, which safeguards the UN's reputation, achieves coherence through the integration of human rights, gender and rule of law concerns, while strengthening effectiveness, should address the following:

- high reputational risks
- long-standing unbalanced GCTS implementation
- insufficient meaningful engagement with civil society

- conflicts of interest
- weak theories of change and results frameworks
- lack of systematic measurement of progress and results achievement at the strategic and programme levels
- undue influence of states with poor records on human rights

Since its establishment in 2017, UNOCT's **resources** have undergone 'spectacular growth': from the 35 posts of the former Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) to 198 by mid-2022. Yet its regular budget allocation of eight posts has remained static. UNOCT's 97 per cent reliance on extrabudgetary resources makes long-term planning harder, and subjects it to the whims of major donors and their current preference for investing heavily in capacity building.

To fulfil its mandated role of system-wide counter-terrorism leadership, coordination, capacity building, promotion of counter-terrorism efforts and resource mobilisation, UNOCT has proposed a seven-fold increase in its regular budget allocation, adding 49 regular budget posts over 2023 and 2024 at a total additional annual cost of US$10 million by 2024. It argues that this would enable key posts in the leadership and integration of cross-cutting issues to be more sustainably funded, support more independent pursuit of GCTS priorities and sustain UNOCT's work, which it sees as popular with member states.

Concerns over UNOCT's funding model – which forces it to focus on programmes with weak theories of change and makes it beholden to influence from states with poor records on human rights – are widely shared. However, increasing UNOCT's regular budget allocation may not solve these problems, and would require cutting posts elsewhere at a time when challenges other than terrorism are arguably more pressing and worse resourced. UNOCT also has 'more funds and sustainability' than comparable entities. To ensure balanced GCTS implementation and address the long-standing neglect for its human rights pillar, resource needs in other Global Compact entities – such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (SR-HRCT) and UN Women – thus appear more urgent.

For member states who wish to tackle weaknesses in the UN's counter-terrorism agenda, there is a range of strategic options on how to resource the UN's counter-terrorism architecture and activities – as well as related areas of work – that may work better than simply agreeing a regular budget increase for UNOCT in the immediate term.

UNOCT's request for **grant-making authority** has been presented as a way to save time and money while strengthening partnerships with civil society and other partners such as regional organisations. However, the result of this could be that UNOCT is able to attract and expend more resources, becoming the 'paymaster' of other entities and continuing to bypass country teams' considered approaches.

Handing UNOCT grant-making authority could cause it to develop a costly bureaucracy of its own, when other entities already have this in place. It could also counteract the necessary shift towards more local-based approaches, which may be better served by requiring UNOCT to work with and through other more experienced, field-based Global Compact entities. Many UN officials and member states have questioned the wisdom of adding to UNOCT's powers in light of concerns over the quality of its programming and its approach to coordination and resource sharing.

Additionally, civil society groups – and many UN officials – remain fearful that handing UNOCT grant-making powers could lead to partnerships that neglect UN guidelines on civic space, support civil society groups associated with abusive counter-terrorism approaches, and co-opt civil society into support roles within poorly designed programmes. Vesting UNOCT with the power to provide grants to regional organisations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, or equipment to member states' security agencies, could present significant reputational risks for the UN. Given this

range of concerns, most UN officials and member states that were consulted suggested rejecting this proposal.

Overall recommendations

1. The persistence and seriousness of concerns over the direction and performance of the UN on counter-terrorism issues suggest the need for a **strategic review and reset**, followed by a significant **process of change management**, across the UN's emerging and fast-growing counter-terrorism architecture. This must be a prior step *before* partner organisations consider redirecting resources and assigning new competencies to UNOCT.

2. As an essential *pre-condition before* any additional resource investments, member states should require the UN system to make **a step-change in results orientation, oversight and risk management** for all of its counter-terrorism work under the GCTS, including by establishing an internal oversight and review mechanism that is:

   - fully **inclusive** of civil society
   - **independent** of but supported by UNOCT and the Global Compact
   - backed by a **credible, comprehensive and inclusively developed theory of change and results framework** to ensure balanced GCTS implementation
   - fed by an **upgraded system-wide approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E)** on all relevant programmes that is robust, independent and focused on outcomes
   - supported to ensure all entities **follow applicable UN standards and manage risks**

3. Member states should require the UN to **eliminate any perceived conflicts of interest** in the management and oversight of its counter-terrorism work – including self-serving strategy and programme evaluation practices, the assignation of resource mobilisation and M&E responsibilities to the same entities and units, and undue influence by particular member states over its direction and performance.

4. Member states should **reject UNOCT's 2022 request for a seven-fold regular budget increase** and **pursue other viable options** for tackling unbalanced implementation, underperformance and sustainability questions – including via setting more **robust rules on composition of voluntary contributions, ensuring better cost-recovery within project budgets** and **improving the orientation and quality of consolidated appeals**.

5. If member states do decide to increase resources for UN counter-terrorism efforts, they should:

   - **allocate these to other Global Compact entities** (that is, those with more credible approaches to core issues such as OHCHR, the SR-HRCT, UN Women, the UN Development Programme [UNDP] and UN Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC]) rather than UNOCT
   - **insist on the use of any additional resources for oversight, safeguards, results orientation and rebalancing** implementation of the GCTS's pillars on human rights, prevention and addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, as well as integration of a gender-transformative approach

6. Member states should **avoid providing UNOCT with grant-making authority** unless and until it addresses the serious and widely shared concerns over its direction, oversight and performance management, as highlighted in this report. To avoid establishing costly and risk-fraught parallel systems, member states should instead **encourage UNOCT to upgrade and streamline its collaboration with other Global Compact entities** already specialised in grant-making and local programme delivery.

More detailed options and recommendations underpinning these points are set out in Section 5.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background and purpose

In 2021, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) unanimously adopted the seventh iteration of its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (7th GCTS).[1] Reaching consensus on it took time and was not straightforward. For example, the negotiations might have taken place in 2020 but for the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic; due to human rights concerns, one of the proposed co-chairs in the process was replaced by an alternative member state; and when negotiations did get underway, blocs of member states emerged, pushing for competing visions of the way forward. Some members proposed to endorse an increase in the UN regular budget allocation for the rapidly growing UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), while authorising it to make grants. Yet at the same time, a growing number of independent experts, civil society groups, UN officials and member states called for much greater attention to the integration of human rights, gender, the rule of law and peacebuilding into the UN's counter-terrorism approach, and were pushing for independent oversight to tackle growing concerns over the direction and performance of the UN's counter-terrorism architecture.[2]

As a result, member states backed a compromise, allowing time for exploration and discussion of three inter-connected core issues:

1. **Oversight and effectiveness** – options for enhancing the effectiveness of and for monitoring and evaluating UN counter-terror efforts, and better integrating the rule of law, human rights and gender issues – including via the development of a results framework.
2. **Appropriate funding** for the integrated and balanced implementation of the GCTS across all its four pillars[3] and to deliver on the mandate given to UNOCT in 2017.[4]
3. **Grant-making** – should UNOCT gain the authority to make direct grants and payments to implementing partners, and if so, how should this work?

The UN Secretary-General (SG) was asked to report on these issues to inform further debate between member states and evolving policy and practice within the UN system. As the SG builds such reports on inputs from UNOCT, this paper provides an independent view on these three issues, together with relevant options, to assist the SG, member states, UN officials and other experts to think them through in the deliberations ahead.

1.2   Methodology

This paper is based on:

- A review of available literature covering more than 50 documents, including past UN resolutions, SG reports, evaluations, audits, guidelines, statements by interested parties, independent studies and articles (see Annex 3 for a full bibliography).
- Semi-structured interviews and consultations with people and organisations working on UN counter-terrorism policy and practice or related fields. There were 26 interviews/consultations in total, including nine with member state representatives, 11 with UN officials working across a range of relevant institutions, and the remainder with independent experts.

The author accurately cites interviewees' feedback on the issues covered, representing the spectrum of opinion encountered in a balanced and fair way. The study preserves interviewees' anonymity at their request in all cases but one, in order to allow for frank sharing of opinions. The study makes no claim as to the representativeness of interviewees' views of wider thinking across the UN or among member states.

> **Box 1: Key points from operative paragraphs 85–87 of the 7th GCTS' (A/RES/75/291)**
> **Oversight and effectiveness:** The GA calls upon the Secretary-General '[t]o assess the need to further enhance the integration of the rule of law, human rights and gender, as cross-cutting elements of the Strategy, in the counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations system in order to strengthen their effectiveness, including the need for internal advisory or monitoring and evaluation capacity in this regard, and to report on his assessment.'
> Regarding the **results framework**, the resolution asks UNOCT and the Global Compact entities 'to assess, as appropriate, methodologies and tools for a results framework to ensure comprehensive, balanced and integrated implementation of the Strategy by the entities subordinate to the General Assembly' (para 93).
> **Appropriate funding:** The GA '[e]mphasizes the need to continue to seek appropriate funding sources for the integrated and balanced implementation of all the pillars of the Strategy across the United Nations system, in an efficient manner, and in this regard welcomes the continuation of voluntary contributions by Member States, recalls its resolution 71/291, in which it emphasized the need to ensure that the Office of Counter-Terrorism is provided with adequate capacity and other resources for the implementation of its mandated activities, and in this regard invites the Secretary-General to carefully assess the finances of the Office and to provide budgetary recommendations, if necessary and on the basis of the technical assessment, to the General Assembly in 2022.'
> **Grant-making:** The GA '[r]equests the Secretary-General undertake a review to determine the most cost-effective mechanism for the provision of grants and payments to the implementing partners of the Office of Counter-Terrorism to carry out activities aimed at preventing and countering terrorism, and to report thereon in 2022.'

1.3   Concerns over the direction and performance of the UN's counter-terrorism architecture

Readers should view the three core issues in focus in this report within the context of the UN's role in support of ongoing global efforts to lessen the threat posed by terrorism and the conditions that give rise to it. The challenge posed by terrorism remains persistent and widely felt: 44 countries witnessed deaths caused by terror attacks during 2021 – 97 per cent of them occurring in countries in conflict.[5] The UN is thus assisting member states to respond to a pressing challenge, and has a unique potential to bring a wide range of tools and expertise –

across its pillars of peace and security, development and human rights – to deal with this complex problem. Led ultimately by the SG and Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, who heads the fast-growing UNOCT, the UN responds to terrorism through a Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact ('the Global Compact') comprising 45 member or observer entities. Many of these entities have decades of experience, extensive field presence, and highly evolved programming, performance management and accountability/reporting mechanisms to apply in their areas of specialism.

Alongside the UN's significant potential to tackle both terrorism and its drivers, it is important to understand the increasingly widespread concerns of UN officials, member states and civil society organisations over the direction and performance of the UN on counter-terrorism issues. This is because unless UNOCT and the wider UN counter-terrorism architecture are performing well, offering them more funds and capabilities may not make political or practical sense. This is especially true in a context where other parts of the UN may be addressing these and other pressing issues equally or more effectively and have equal or greater resource needs. These concerns must also shape thinking on how to oversee and strengthen the effectiveness of the architecture, and the financing, partnership and coordination approaches that may be needed. These concerns include the following issues:

1. risks of reinforcing overly militarised and securitised counter-terrorism responses
2. neglect for prevention, peacebuilding and human rights
3. undermining and misappropriating the UN's core values in the service of repression
4. inclusion, empowerment and accountability deficits
5. gender tokenism
6. incoherence
7. weak oversight, performance and risk management

These points are more fully elaborated in Annex 1.

1.4   A change management agenda

Among many of those involved, there is impatience to see UN counter-terrorism efforts reformed and right-sized. Indeed, the persistence and seriousness of these concerns suggest the need for a significant process of change management across the UN's emerging and fast-growing counter-terrorism architecture *before* partners consider redirecting resources and competencies that could be reserved for other UN priorities and agencies towards the further growth of UN counter-terrorism institutions and architecture. The required process of change management[6] could be attentive to the following areas:

- Stronger **leadership** and **cultural change** to ensure the UN's counter-terrorism approach reflects the organisation's charter and values.
- Adopting a **people-focused, inclusive and empowering** approach that recognises the vital role of free, equitable individuals, communities and civil societies, in particular women, young people and those from minority groups and disadvantaged backgrounds, in improving and maintaining human security, good governance, peace and human rights, and strengthening the UN's approach to these matters.
- Placing much greater **emphasis on just and sustainable prevention, peacebuilding, human rights and development** solutions to security challenges, through
    - greater **coherence** between UN counter-terror efforts and the approach taken by other agencies, Resident Coordinators and UN country teams – including by leveraging the full capacities and potential contributions of agencies within the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact ('the Global Compact')

while

- exercising due **caution** over extending the UN's counter-terrorism architecture to '[avoid] the centering of counterterrorism as the single or principal focus and its potentially distorting effects', when responding to the complex challenges posed by conflicts, human rights abuses and repression.[7]

- Clearer **guidance** on how to navigate the risks and integrate UN values into the UN's response to terrorism and related challenges, while addressing weaknesses in counter-terrorism terminology and improving theories of change.

- Reinforcing the above through significant improvements in **oversight, results orientation and risk management,** from the strategic to the programme and project levels, to institutionalise 'do-no-harm' approaches, human rights safeguards, balanced, effective GCTS implementation and genuine results orientation.

It is against the backdrop of these concerns and suggestions that questions of oversight and effectiveness, budget and finance, and grant-making responsibilities need to be analysed.

2 Oversight and effectiveness

Given the significant concerns over the direction and performance of the UN counter-terrorism architecture, considerably stronger results orientation, oversight and risk management have a critical role to play. This strengthening can and should be seen as a pre-condition for any additional resource investments, rather than an afterthought. This section explores the current status of oversight and risk and performance management, existing needs and requirements, and relevant concerns and considerations that should shape the way forward, as a basis for the articulation of relevant options and suggested improvements in Section 5.

2.1 Current practice

In 2017, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) found that:

> '[i]t remains unclear how to determine each entity's effectiveness on the ground outside of completing country visits, attending meetings, and facilitating workshops. No entity in the UN counter-terrorism structure has developed effective tools for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their activities.'[8]

In 2019, in A/73/866, the UNSG made a similar acknowledgement, stating that '[t]he United Nations system faces challenges in presenting quantifiable progress in implementing the Strategy, in particular because the Strategy and its accompanying plan of action do not include a mechanism to monitor and track progress against the expected results and impact under each of the four pillars.'[9]

There has been much evolution in practice since FIDH's finding was published, and – mirroring the complexity of the UN counter-terrorism architecture itself – the oversight, performance and risk management of UN counter-terror work is multifaceted. A summary table of relevant capacities, standards, procedures and initiatives is presented in Annex 2.

2.2 Needs and requirements

This complex, evolving set of capacities, standards, procedures and initiatives must be analysed closely to build on and standardise positive elements of existing practice, making careful adjustments in areas with potential. At the same time, there is the need to take bold action to reform and innovate where weaknesses, inefficiencies and risks are uncovered – while being ever cautious about eroding useful elements, creating duplication or causing inefficiency.

Attention to the quality of UN counter-terrorism efforts is urgent, not only in light of the serious concerns noted above, but also given the sprawling growth and enormous budget and footprint of current programming: as of August 2019, at least 314 projects identified as relevant to the GCTS were being implemented by Global Compact entities,[10] alongside other projects run by various entities. Given the nature and location of activities (security assistance in contexts with high levels of human rights abuses, often committed in the name of counter-terrorism),[11] and the troubling wider track record of international counter-terror efforts in recent decades,[12] the stakes are high to ensure that safeguards – such as the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), 'do-no-harm' monitoring and lesson-learning[13] – are functioning effectively.

Sixteen years into the implementation of the GCTS, the SG has highlighted the urgent need for an evidence-based push to strengthen effectiveness and impacts: 'Efforts need to pivot from national strategies and policies to coordinated and impactful action on the ground. More innovation is needed, such as…empirical evidence and evaluation, to improve effectiveness.'[14] The GCTS itself stresses the need to enhance the effectiveness of UN

counter-terrorism activities, and requests UNOCT to maintain quarterly briefings and provide full transparency to member states on its work, programmes, selection and funding of projects, their outcomes and lessons learnt, and efforts to integrate human rights and gender.[15]

As noted, the 7th GCTS also 'requests [UNOCT]…to assess…methodologies and tools for a results framework to ensure comprehensive, balanced and integrated implementation of the [GCTS] Strategy by the entities subordinate to the General Assembly', and report back.[16] This follows up on the surprisingly timid and superficial suggestions provided by the SG's 2019 report, 'Options on ways to assess the impact and progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the United Nations system'. Rather than simply explaining how the SG will apply results-based management to a strategy and UN entities that he line-manages, the report suggests:

> 'Member States may wish to address this by requesting that the United Nations develop a comprehensive results framework for the Strategy following the seventh biennial review process, in 2020. This could then be updated every two years to coincide with my report to the General Assembly.'[17]

This report – purportedly on options for the UN to assess impact and progress on a then 13-year-old GCTS on which it could not demonstrate 'quantifiable progress'[18] – devoted more than 13 of its 16 pages to hailing the success of reform and change management in the UN's counter-terrorism architecture, cataloguing recent activities, encouraging member states to implement and monitor the GCTS for themselves, underlining the evolving terrorism threat, and requesting more funding. It thus devoted only a few brief paragraphs to outlining a possible results framework and other M&E options, as follows:

> 'The results framework could set out anticipated outputs, outcomes and impact in delivering the four pillars of the Strategy. Results could be defined by key performance indicators, which would need to be quantifiable and measurable using data from verified sources. The framework could include baseline values and realistic targets expected for outputs and outcomes to monitor progress over time, as well as any underlying critical assumptions that must be in place for an intervention to be successful. The framework should include a human rights-based approach to programming similar to that practised by other United Nations entities.' [19]

The SG further called on member states to:

> '[c]onsider how to encourage greater standardization and alignment of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, methodologies and tools used by Global Compact entities to assess the impact of their counter-terrorism and prevent violent extremism activities. The new Global Compact Working Group on Resource Mobilization and Monitoring and Evaluation can provide guidance on common quantitative and qualitative tools. This can include exploring ways to apply common risk assessments, including human rights risks, and the human rights due diligence policy, whenever applicable, and ways to mitigate risks on all projects prior to implementation. The application of such guidance would facilitate reporting on the impact of projects and provide opportunities for evaluations mid-cycle and at the end of projects, improving the quality of service delivery.'[20]

The SG's report also suggests drawing on 'field-based research' including the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate's (CTED's) Global Counter-Terrorism Research Network, field offices and civil society organisations to inform design and evaluation.[21] And it suggests monitoring how resources are allocated by Global Compact entities across the four pillars of the GCTS to monitor balanced implementation.[22]

Overall, however, the suggestions made in the SG's report were brief and lacked a due basis in detailed analysis of pertinent issues. A/73/866 thus represented a missed opportunity for elaborating how proper oversight, results orientation and risk management could strengthen the effectiveness of the UN in an underperforming area.

The 7th GCTS also notes 'the important contribution of women to the design, implementation and monitoring of the Strategy',[23] while the SG's report on GCTS implementation emphasises the benefits of the UN system listening to and partnering with civil society, highlighting the need for adequate resources to enable its engagement.[24] In this regard, CTED, UNOCT and Global Compact engagement with civil society can be held to the UN system-wide standards required under the Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space and the SG's call to action for human rights.[25]

2.3 Visioning a step change in UN counter-terrorism oversight and effectiveness

Noting the concerns regarding the direction and performance of the UN system on counter-terrorism, the complex and evolving picture of current performance management and oversight capacities, standards, procedures and initiatives, and officially acknowledged needs and requirements, this section outlines considerations emerging from the literature and interviews with people and organisations involved that should inform a step change in the oversight, results orientation and risk management of all UN counter-terrorism related activities.

2.3.1 Strategic review and reset

A process for change management should be built on firm foundations of a broader dialogue on the lessons of the past 20 years of counter-terrorism. Useful models for setting new directions forward may include the 2015 High-Level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the Panel of Experts report on the peacebuilding architecture review.[26] Structural reforms to right-size the UN counter-terrorism architecture, and restore overall UN strategic direction and coherence on counter-terrorism and inter-related issues, should not be off the table.

2.3.2 Navigating risks

However, there are important risks to exploring these matters, for example: that attempts to better integrate counter-terrorism efforts lead to counter-productive securitisation of UN approaches in other areas; that tweaking the system makes it more complicated and facilitates 'cherry-picking' as to which M&E and oversight institution or process is relied on by UN counter-terrorism entities; and that well-functioning mechanisms, such as the existing mandate of the SR-HRCT, could be duplicated by a weaker structure or remain chronically under-resourced.[27] Member states will need a careful approach to strengthen the best functioning aspects of performance management and oversight, while addressing gaps within what is a complex set of institutions and relationships.

2.3.3 Dual function: preventing harm and improving effectiveness

The requirement is for structures, procedures and capacities that both:

- **safeguard the UN's reputation and prevent harm** by 'ensur[ing] UN counter-terrorism programming is not harming human rights, gender equality, civic space or peacebuilding'.[28] For this, it will be important to monitor the adequacy and effective application of guidance, safeguards, standards and procedures to prevent harm, such as the integration of HRDDP and conflict or peacebuilding assessments into decision-making. At present, according to one UN official, '"[w]e have HRDDP, and tools for example on avoiding instrumentalising civil society. But these tools aren't being used because of lack of political will"[29]

- **improve effectiveness** – that is, fulfil GCTS objectives and ensure the positive contribution of UN counter-terrorism efforts to human rights fulfilment, more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, and gender and other equalities within the framework of sustainable development

2.3.4 Addressing problems of orientation and unbalanced implementation: prioritising and monitoring conflict prevention and human rights

The UN's new approach to oversight and performance management needs to tackle the problematic orientation of the present architecture and tackle the long-standing problem of unbalanced GCTS implementation. Given the deleterious worldwide impacts of counter-terrorism measures on human rights and humanitarian and civic space,[30] the UN needs to develop programmes inclusively that are contextually appropriate and have strong theories of change to counteract these trends, support partners who are committed to and specialised in working towards these ends, and carefully monitor, evaluate, learn and adapt its programmes in this area.

In addition to the failure to prioritise human-rights-related programmes and monitor human rights outcomes from its counter-terrorism efforts (see Annex 1), design, monitoring and evaluation needs to craft a much clearer connection to the conflict prevention and mitigation aspects of GCTS Pillars I and IV. In SG reports on GCTS implementation, little is said regarding substantive UN engagement with conditions conducive, conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution or peacebuilding by addressing drivers of conflict and violence, nor is there any discussion of the impacts of any such work.[31]

This is a major, wholly unnecessary blind spot. As one member state representative noted with concern:

> "In Africa, the line between terrorism and armed conflict is increasingly blurred. You have places where counter-terrorism is going on side-by-side with political peace processes and mediation, and the relationship between those two is not well understood and acknowledged…so definitely counter-terrorism needs to be conflict-sensitive…"[32]

As another member state representative pointed out, beyond reporting on security capacity building:

> "They need a broader picture – the development, prevention, governance angle – there's a big gap…Development shouldn't be securitised, but it is vital to prevention...So the UN needs to monitor it in a joined-up way."[33]

When designing, monitoring and evaluating the GCTS and relevant programming, due focus on prevention, conditions conducive, human rights and actions taken by the UN's substantial peacebuilding, political affairs, relief and development agencies in support of conflict mitigation, resolution and recovery could significantly help resolve this oversight – and would remain within the spirit and letter of the GCTS.[34]

2.3.5 Protecting civil society and reversing deficits in meaningful engagement with civil society[35]

Oversight of UN counter-terrorism engagement must help to protect against use of counter-terrorism to close civic space, while strategy development, programme design, monitoring, evaluation and learning must all be built on systematic civil society organisation (CSO) involvement and feedback.[36] This may be an area where it is valuable to leverage the orientation and experience of Global Compact entities other than UNOCT as champions and conduits for CSOs' inclusion.[37]

In a context where civil society has strongly articulated the 'inadequate, ad hoc, and opaque nature of UN counter-terrorism entities' engagement with CSOs to date',[38] all branches of UNOCT and Global Compact entities likewise need to do much more to 'ensure civil society is able to provide input into the design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of programs'.[39]

As one member state interviewee pointed out, CSOs have greater institutional, thematic and geographic memory than many diplomats and officials and, as such, can 'help think through the results we need' and provide vital feedback.[40] GCTS reviews and other processes should also become markedly more inclusive – consulting civil society with wide appeals (down to country level) for input, ample notice, extensive consultation and conscientious incorporation of feedback.[41] UNOCT needs to move away from the idea of this being something that becomes possible only if member states choose to fund it, and towards integrating such consultation as a fundamental aspect of its working culture and approach.[42] This inclusion is, in turn, an area of performance that in itself needs to be closely monitored and evaluated.

2.3.6 Integrating gender

To get to grips with the challenge of 'gender tokenism', noted above, performance management and oversight needs to:

> '[t]ake into account the differing experiences, effects, impacts, and needs of people with different gender identities in its counterterrorism and PVE [preventing violent extremism] policies, entities, and programs. Global Compact entities should account for gender equity and representation in its [sic] operations, project partners, and beneficiaries; develop projects that actively center and amplify women's and gender nonbinary voices; account for gendered power dynamics in political-economy analyses.'[43]

A range of important issues to integrate and monitor are flagged in the recent Saferworld study '*No shortcuts to security*',[44] while UN Women's 'Gender marker guidance note' provides a method for tracking gender integration in projects.[45]

2.3.7 Tackling conflict of interest and undue influence: the need to standardise independent oversight and performance management

In May 2022, CSOs from 43 countries called on member states to '[e]stablish independent and adequately resourced internal oversight of [UN] counter-terrorism architecture.'[46] As Saferworld notes, there is a 'clear, loud constituency across member states, civil society and UN entities that recognise the need for increased oversight over UN counter-terrorism engagement'.[47] Several interviewees reaffirmed this concern.[48]

The practice whereby UNOCT drafts UNSG reports on implementation of the GCTS, its budget, grant making and oversight, as well as other issues, creates concerns that policy debates will fail to examine performance concerns and policy options thoroughly.[49] There is likewise an important conflict of interest between UNOCT's role in promoting and mobilising resources for counter-terrorism work within the UN system[50] and its role in assessing progress, troubleshooting risks, and supporting learning and adaptation – which must be balanced and robust. The same conflict of interest problematises the role of the Global Compact Working Group on Resource Mobilization and Monitoring and Evaluation: rigorous M&E and fundraising responsibilities should be distinct, not yoked together.

States that model balanced implementation of the GCTS and in particular respect for human rights while countering terrorism should be playing a lead role in UN counter-terrorism policy development and oversight processes. Yet existing structures have long handed undue influence to states with poor records on human rights. According to one UN official, since

leading states are prepared to intercede with UN officials to stymie greater focus on justice, legal support and human rights, "[i]t's no accident that the focus is so much on security aspects of counter-terrorism."[51]

A similar concern also applies to the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre's (UNCCT's) Advisory Board, which has been chaired since its establishment by significant donor and notorious rights abuser, Saudi Arabia.[52] One participant described this board as "not very conducive to better management of resources".[53] An internal UN audit in 2018 recommended that 'UNOCT should work with Member States to develop a clear plan for a review of the role, membership, working methods and reporting needs of the UNCCT Advisory Board.'[54] Separating counter-terrorism performance management from the undue influence of specific member states – including by involving eminent experts or personalities – could prove vital.[55]

This need for independence applies at other levels.[56] Whereas independent evaluations and reviews at the strategy level need to build on "routine, truly independent evaluation processes", in many cases, according to one official, "[UN] programmes often do these self-serving assessments."[57]

Referring to the need for a focal point to ensure adherence to HRDDP, another UN official asserted that this post must sit outside UNOCT.[58] A third official praised the work of the SR-HRCT in calling for HRDDP implementation, but flagged the lack of an enforcement mechanism to ensure standards were upheld.[59] According to another official, in part because some officials had limited understanding of HRDDP and human rights integration, the UN was in practice not stringent enough in applying HRDDP when capacity assistance requests came in from UN member states, and compliance with international law remained low in many cases after assistance had been provided.[60]

Examples of more positive practice include:

- the Office of Internal Oversight Services' (OIOS) 2018 audit of UNCCT[61]
- Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler's (KPMG's) 2020 'Evaluation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre'[62]
- UNODC's 2020 synthesis of evaluations of PVE and crime interventions[63]
- the 2021 'Learn better, together' report, which synthesises evaluations of UN programming under the GCTS[64]

These examples demonstrate that independent scrutiny and evaluation are both possible and produce valuable recommendations.[65] In this sense, the step change needed is arguably in part a move to standardise approaches that have been piloted.[66] There are numerous signs that UNOCT is beginning to embrace more credible performance management approaches,[67] even if starting from a low base where it needs to revisit questionable theories of change[68] and do more to address past recommendations.

UNOCT now needs to make ad hoc improvements into standard, regular procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance against a comprehensive framework to consider intended and unintended impacts, with much greater levels of transparency and inclusion. At the same time, stronger oversight, results orientation and risk management will need to build on the best of existing expertise and approaches in other Global Compact entities, cultivating their strong buy-in to shared M&E approaches and stepping up the progress made by the Global Compact Working Group that works on M&E – rather than being driven by UNOCT per se.

2.3.8 Strengthening line management by the Secretary-General

As the Global Center on Cooperative Security ('the Global Center') notes, '[c]oncerns have been voiced about the absence of clear UN leadership on counterterrorism abuses.'[69] Officials consulted affirmed the need for the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) to use his good offices to ensure UNOCT was functioning well in line with the UN Charter, guidance on civic space, preventing violent extremism (PVE) plan of action and other policies.[70] Formally speaking, UNOCT is answerable to the SG on performance concerns and, given the gravity of such concerns, more proactive engagement by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) to assert quality control and reverse conflict of interest by instituting independent oversight and results-oriented M&E is warranted.

The SG also has a responsibility and duty of care to oversee politically sensitive decisions over the UN's engagement with regional bodies whose approach to counter-terrorism undermines human rights, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, with which CTED has signed a cooperation framework.[71]

2.3.9 Reorienting strategic oversight: towards a focus on results

It is a huge weakness that current reporting focuses almost exclusively on enumerating activities or 'outputs'. Results orientation is a critical element of the SG's drive to '[u]pgrade the UN' under the Common Agenda.[72] As some officials noted, reflection on whether current approaches are reducing the problem of terrorism could help support reorientation of counter-terrorism approaches away from reinforcement of problematic states.[73]

However, a number of interviewees complained of activity-focused reporting that failed to analyse results.[74] As one explained, UNOCT had gone from too little transparency on its activities to "flooding [member states] with reporting on everything" – burying important analysis in lists of dates and events convened and attended.[75] Another expressed fatigue with "videos, fancy packets on information…endless new launch events – first video games, then sports", stating that there remained "big questions about what this really does".[76] Several others echoed these views.[77] In particular, the "[GCTS] review is problematic because it should look at how we're doing, and then put forward new goals – but it doesn't".[78]

Although scrutiny of counter-terrorism outcomes could meet with strong internal opposition if it exposed weaknesses,[79] such opposition needs to be overcome, because making future GCTS reviews strategic, rigorous and evidence based is critical to the fate of efforts to strengthen effectiveness.

This aligns with the recommendation of an external evaluation of UNCCT for 2016–20 to 'strengthen the results culture in the Office and undertake outcome monitoring of projects and programmes' and to ensure that 'the next results framework should include a clear statement of the expected impact of the Centre and its contribution to the implementation of the [GCTS] by Member States'.[80]

Focusing UN counter-terrorism efforts on the right impacts requires concentrating them on tackling problems identified not only in CTED assessments (which in turn need to become much more transparent and inclusive),[81] but also in Universal Periodic Reviews and Treaty-based Bodies' country reports. This likewise requires shifting emphasis beyond whether CTED-identified capacity support needs are being met,[82] to the broader question of whether GCTS objectives are being fulfilled.[83]

2.3.10 Making GCTS reviews strategic

To become more strategic, future GCTS reviews must then concentrate on achievement of *outcomes*.[84] To do this, they should focus on assessments of results and troubleshooting

performance against a comprehensive GCTS theory of change and outcome framework with strategic objectives, outcomes and indicators across the four pillars – that is, fully integrating impacts of counter-terrorism efforts on human rights, conflict and gender dynamics, and CSO inclusion.[85]

Box 2: Towards a credible theory of change and results framework for the GCTS and related programmes

As one UN official stressed, programme design needs to be rooted in credible theories of change as the basis for programme assurance,[86] matching the recommendation of the self-evaluation of a UNOCT project on PVE through youth empowerment in four countries. This, according to UNOCT, highlighted 'the need to design a sound theory of change, including performance monitoring tools, to guide the remaining duration of the project'.[87]

A draft theory of change and results framework has been quietly developed by the Global Compact Working Group on Resource Mobilization and Monitoring and Evaluation.[88] A strong framework would be a big step towards results orientation and accountability, but the draft needs to be significantly improved before it provides a valid framework for monitoring and evaluating the GCTS. Improvements could include the following:

- The development of this critical framework with little or no civil society consultation illustrates the wider, persistent inclusivity failures in the design, implementation and M&E of the UN's counter-terrorism agenda. The framework could be significantly ameliorated through greater consultation of multidisciplinary civil society experts.
- A comprehensive results framework – and project/programme and country-level M&E – should reflect a balance between measures of capacities, changes in the objective situation and public perceptions of progress.[89] It could valuably build on monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16+ indicators, to underline the connectivity between counter-terrorism success and broader progress on peace, rights, development and equalities as set out in SDG16+.[90]
- It is vital that the final results framework be more specific in defining outcomes that focus on efforts to deliver concrete improvements in public well-being, while protecting human rights.
  - The draft outcome in the critical area of respect for human rights is: 'Increase in the number of Member States that are parties to and implement the core international instruments on human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law'.[91] While the outcome covers an important area in theory, it is so broad as to be impossible to monitor and attribute progress to UN counter-terrorism programmes in a meaningful way.
  - In the final framework, it will be necessary to focus on whether the most prevalent and egregious rights violations specifically being committed in the name of counter-terrorism (as elaborated in SR-HRCT reports) are being successfully discouraged by UN efforts.
  - In relation to such an outcome, it would be relevant to monitor a balanced basket of indicators; for example, on public perceptions of safety and trust in police and other security forces; changes in the objective situation, such as levels of violence overall and in particular, the incidence of both terror attacks and state-sponsored violence; and state capacity to uphold the rule of law through the criminal justice system, whether oversight is in place, and so on. Dozens of relevant indicators from credible sources in these and other relevant areas already exist.[92]

> - o Another draft outcome is: 'Increased international cooperation among Member States on PVE/CT'.[93] Yet states' cooperation is a means not an end in itself. Given the known harms due to many states' counter-terrorism responses, not all such cooperation is positive.[94]
> - o Another outcome is: 'Member States implement the comprehensive international standards on money-laundering'.[95] Consultation with civil society could help reformulate this to reflect a more human rights-based approach – to help track and obviate the well-known risks of such standards being used to shut down civic space and hamper humanitarian assistance.

Assessing results against a credible GCTS theory of change and results framework would address the first recommendation of the recent UN meta-synthesis of counter-terrorism programme evaluations, for 'a full-fledged, independent evaluation of the UNGCTS…to derive robust findings on results achieved, good practices, and lessons learned'.[96] Such outcome-focused GCTS evaluations should be standardised and regularised in the form of an independent progress review covering all GCTS pillars in the year preceding its review by member states.

Such GCTS reviews should be less frequent (every four years may be optimal), to enable time for UN entities and member states to pursue implementation between reviews[97] and shift the focus away from political 'horse-trading' over commitments divorced from the realities of implementation[98] and towards a focus on achieving impact and troubleshooting poor performance. Regular GCTS reviews should also consider and thus help ensure 'UN entities' compliance with and oversight of international law obligations in their counterterrorism and PVE efforts'.[99]

To optimise GCTS reviews, it may make sense to draw on other examples of effective review practice from elsewhere in the UN system, such as the 'Peacebuilding Strategy Review'.[100] As elaborated below, to bolster transparency and independence, the process should be placed under an independent reviewer or panel of experts to provide a focal point and lessen the problems of Global Compact entities together 'marking their own homework' in an enclosed environment.

2.3.11 Establishing a robust, independent and influential oversight focal point – while reinforcing other well-functioning programming and oversight capacities

As has been shown, the UN's counter-terrorism architecture is diffuse, complex and, ultimately, 'overwhelming'.[101] Oversight and management for results need integrating across it, and must be guaranteed by a stronger focal point and guiding framework. Here it is important to recognise also 'the precarious foothold of human rights expertise and impact within the counterterrorism architecture' and the 'sustained adversity' presented by rights-violating states towards people and entities that challenge such practice.[102]

Arrangements that can withstand such adversity are required in response. An independent focal point for oversight and management of results is thus required, and should sit outside of UNOCT and other Global Compact entities, while requiring their support and buy-in. This focal point could take the form of an independent reviewer or a panel of eminent experts, and should be appointed by the SG in consultation with Global Compact entities, member states and CSOs. An important part of its role should be to review progress towards achievement of the objectives of the GCTS in line with a comprehensive, inclusively developed results framework in advance of GCTS reviews.

Citing a case where the establishment of a PVE programme in a Rohingya refugee camp was only halted following intervention by the SG, a further option elaborated by civil society

experts is 'the creation of a fully independent Human Rights Ombudsperson' to provide 'truly impartial and independent' oversight on respect for human rights and the rule of law in UN counter-terrorism efforts, at a 'systems-level':

> 'Appointed by the secretary-general, such a role would have operational independence, free from influence from any government, as well as senior leadership of the U.N. to examine, assess, and provide advice to the U.N. on the human rights, rule of law, governance, and institutional gaps that impact the counterterrorism architecture's ability to contribute to the overarching goals of the U.N., including the Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals.'[103]

Such a role would reflect existing UN and member state best practice (such as the ombudsperson for the 1267 Committee or the UK's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation), and would seek to prevent UN involvement in counter-terrorism related human rights violations across its rapidly developing portfolio of relevant programming. If adopted, it could complement and strengthen of the roles of OHCHR and the SR-HRCT, serving to 'multiply the human-rights focused energies of all others in the system'.[104]

Despite the clear merits of a robust mechanism to prevent harm in this way, according to interviewees, there was limited support for creating a wholly independent ombudsperson for human rights oversight. Such terminology was seen as being too legal, bringing too narrow a vision of what was needed (preventing harm or settling disputes rather than enhancing a more universal vision of effectiveness and accountability).[105] Within UNOCT, according to a UN official, most are comfortable with enhancing performance management – but would be more cautious about challenging external oversight.[106] For this reason, establishing oversight under the SG's existing line management authority could offer a viable compromise: it would be compatible with existing structures and consistent with the 7th GCTS' call for 'internal' M&E options, while providing a crucial degree of independence from UNOCT and other specific entities. This independence is a fundamental necessity, given the strongly expressed concerns within and beyond the UN system, in particular, regarding the approach of UNOCT.

The independent reviewer/panel of experts would require a sound mechanism to engage with UNOCT and other Global Compact entities. To achieve this, the reviewer/panel could chair and draw on a board consisting of a limited number of expert performance management focal points (drawn from Global Compact agencies who are implementing significant volumes of relevant programmes or playing an important oversight role). Such a board should include one member each from UNOCT, CTED, UNDP, UNODC, UN Women, OHCHR and the SR-HRCT's office. This composition is also desirable because, as one UN official pointed out, "[UNOCT] forms what the SG thinks on these topics, so it becomes hard for other agencies to get messages across…The four pillars [of the GCTS] can't be managed by one entity that has such a narrow agenda."[107]

This independent reviewer/panel and its board could sit above, task and receive input from the Global Compact's working group on M&E, and also act (if a separate ombudsperson is not put in place) as a standing review body to monitor performance and compliance issues within day-to-day UN counter-terrorism activities. This would ensure no harm was being done in the UN's name – raising concerns with relevant senior staff across Global Compact entities and, where appropriate, with the SG.

2.3.12 Tackling capacity constraints in the right(s) places

Capacities to support integration of human rights, gender equality, civil society inclusion and linkages to conflict prevention are either stretched, yet to be developed or non-existent. Therefore, 'measured against the task at hand, additional structural mechanisms must be

considered'.[108] It will be important not merely to create posts focusing on such issues (such as human rights expertise in UNOCT field presences),[109] but to fill them with credible expertise and ideally house them within entities with credible orientation and a reputation for championing these issues. On human rights, this means OHCHR and the SR-HRCT; regarding gender integration, this means UN Women; and so on.[110] At the same time, if posts are created in other entities, they will need to have access to UNOCT, and clout within the bureaucracy, to ensure integration of relevant issues at the design, implementation, and M&E stages.[111] In particular, there is a need to resource the roles played in oversight and integration of human rights by OHCHR and the SR-HRCT, 'whose capacities are critically overstretched'.[112] OHCHR has only one officer dedicated to supporting counter-terrorism work within the Global Compact, while the SR-HRCT has no resources or capacity provided by the UN system to undertake the role.[113] Expert staff from Global Compact entities serving as board members in support of any independent reviewer/panel should be covered by regular budget funding.

It is likewise important to reduce pressure on these entities by ensuring other elements of the UN system play a more proactive role in upholding and promoting human rights, good governance and sustaining peace as the foundation of just, effective and sustainable counter-terrorism.[114] At present, there is a problem of project budgets not providing for human rights advice, and therefore entities turning to the SR-HRCT and OHCHR for advice – which they have very limited staff capacity and resources to provide.

To overcome this, project budget funding must achieve full cost recovery, to include adequate, ring-fenced amounts to pay for intra-system advice on cross-cutting issues, with funds passed on to the entities providing this advice. As discussed in section 3, insisting to project donors on full cost recovery to implement proper performance management in line with UN standards is the only sure method to ensure there is funding to cover capacities needed in proportion to the changing volume of programming. UNOCT's request for additional regular budget funding to cover its human rights and gender functions is discussed further below.

2.3.13 Generating evidence on well-defined outcomes: M&E methods, capacities and resources

As Saferworld has argued, there is a need to 'strengthen and standardise monitoring and evaluation frameworks, methodologies and tools used by UN entities to assess the impact of their counter-terrorism and P/CVE [preventing/countering violent extremism] programming'.[115] Other interviewees, the Global Center[116] and multiple UN reports all corroborate this view.

According to one UN official, although UNOCT is coordinating the development of a results framework, it is unclear how helpful this will prove: with some exceptions, "projects haven't been producing enough data to inform this".[117] Deficiencies in M&E have been a problem for several years. A 2018 UN audit of UNCCT found that, 'no…formal project evaluations ha[d] yet been conducted' by the UNCCT and called for 'a system for improved qualitative and quantitative reporting of UNCCT programme performance,…post-project evaluation and impact assessment'.[118] Two years later, despite 'a large body of outputs, which are reported and observable', KPMG's evaluation of UNCCT 'could not identify and verify results against the four outcomes set out in the 5-Year Programme Results Framework' due to 'an underlying weakness in UNCCT systems for programme governance, monitoring and evaluation and for information management'.[119]

UNODC's synthesis of PVE and crime programme evaluations noted weak results orientation and M&E: 'Nearly half of the reviewed reports noted a need for more systematic measurement of programme progress and results achievement, starting from the planning phases'.[120] The UN meta-synthesis of counter-terrorism evaluations likewise found it:

> 'evident that most of the available evidence was inadequate to assess (not to mention quantify) the extent to which…outcomes were being achieved. This is true not just with respect to second-order outcomes with complex causal chains such as behavioral changes, but even with respect to the first-order outcomes such as change in knowledge and awareness.…concrete data on the outcomes and impacts (e.g., level of trust between communities, or between communities and government institutions) of these interventions was not available…barring some exceptions, few reports followed up to collect data on the actual use of capacity development'.[121]

Based on this, the UN's meta-synthesis:

> 'identified large gaps in availability of evidence that require more information to make a determination on the degree of success…evaluation, impact, results of counterterrorism activities in the long-term perspective – is a recurrent issue and a potential weakness of the current UNGCTS'.[122]

As a consequence, the report called for more evidence-based programmes that 'start with robust research' and involve 'continuous data collection for monitoring', as part of a more standardised system-wide approach to M&E. [123] It also recommended 'investment into producing data necessary to measure change, as well as in development of a common evaluation framework'.[124] This would require 'strengthening evaluation knowledge and capacities of internal and external stakeholders'[125] – notably 'capacity to assess impact on human rights and rule of law of [counter-terrorism] actions by UN entities and their partners',[126] and 'developing a common M&E framework for the UNGCTS for identifying and measuring results and impact'.[127]

When strengthening these M&E capacities and approaches, it will be important for lead counter-terrorism agencies to reflect on best practices from the peacebuilding and human rights fields. Methods for peace and community security programme evaluation that harvest stakeholders' perceptions of outcomes or 'most significant changes' are explained in the CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Saferworld study '*Evaluating Impacts of Peacebuilding Interventions: Approaches and Methods, Challenges and Considerations*'.[128] As noted in the UN meta-synthesis, '[a] rights-based evaluation is not just a technical exercise in data collection and analysis. It is a dialogue and a democratic process to learn from each other, to strengthen accountability and to change power relations between stakeholders.'[129] As an example of how this understanding is being adopted by the UN, in line with the SG's push to 'put people at the centre' under the Common Agenda,[130] the Peacebuilding Fund employs a 'decentralized evaluation strategy', whereby 'every financed PVE project must be *evaluated by the recipients*'.[131]

The resources to generate data on outcomes and analyse theories of change need to be built into the design and budgets of all GCTS-relevant programming, and M&E skills need strengthening across the Global Compact – with agencies with the strongest capacities in the lead. To connect to strategic reviews of the GCTS as a whole, project monitoring must be well linked to the wider GCTS theory of change and results framework.

2.3.14 A greater role for Resident Coordinators and country teams

Whereas the SG's report on options to assess impact and progress downplayed the idea of Resident Coordinators (RCs) ensuring inter-agency coordination and decision-making at the

national and regional levels due to their 'limited capacity',[132] one official interviewed voiced concerns over the dangers of incoherent UN approaches in sensitive contexts, highlighting that UNOCT often touched on issues other UN agencies were working on, such as judicial reform.[133] The same official suggested it would be helpful for national and regional counter-terrorism engagement and activities, including those undertaken by UNOCT, to fall more explicitly under the purview of RCs.[134]

Several interviewees supported this idea,[135] flagging for example that "[UN]OCT needs to be better in cooperating with other agencies, UN presences and peace efforts in the field".[136] For instance, in terror-affected regions of Africa, "[w]orking in parallel to UN country plans and then leaving isn't going to lead to sustainable gains in counter-terrorism."[137] Another official described a problematic case in which, in a sensitive, repressive context, UNOCT had "parachuted in and started doing things".[138] Another senior official cited several further instances of this occurring in Africa and Asia.[139]

Greater coherence could be achieved either by bringing UNOCT into the UN's Sustainable Development Group and its 'Management and Accountability Framework': it is currently one of the few entities with increasing engagement at the country level that falls outside this group.[140] Alternatively, separate standards could be agreed that ensure UNOCT complements country teams' approach and does not bypass the contextual knowledge, guidance, quality control and oversight that RCs provide.[141] At the same time, another interviewee flagged that it was not always beneficial to bring in counter-terrorism into RCs' mandates, because RCs might not always have relevant expertise, and because doing so could risk securitising an otherwise developmental approach.[142]

2.3.15 Addressing questions around scope

A new performance management and oversight mechanism should certainly cover the GCTS and implementing bodies under the authority of the GA. However, ideally, it should also look at UN counter-terrorism action pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions. Yet overseeing Security Council-related actions would be less straightforward given the distinct roles and approaches of the two bodies.[143] Nonetheless, a UN official interviewed argued that any comprehensive review process should also cover the work of CTED, along with other Global Compact entities.[144]

3   Appropriate funding for GCTS implementation and UNOCT mandate fulfilment

3.1   Current budget level

According to the SG's 2020 report on GCTS implementation, '[t]he overall budget of the 2019 project portfolio is US$522.3 million'.[145] In the UN's 2022 political affairs budget, it was estimated that the UNOCT would have 173 extrabudgetary posts, whereas eight would be covered by the regular budget (which provided $1,590,500 for these eight posts).[146] In fact, by the time of the 2023 political affairs budget, UNOCT had grown to 198 posts, 190 of which were extrabudgetary.[147] The 2022 budget anticipated $51,024,700 in extrabudgetary resources, including for 173 posts.[148] However, the 2023 budget projects UNOCT extrabudgetary resources as reaching $66,004,600 in 2022, to be followed by a possible reduction to $61,603,700 in 2023 (a figure that would still represent a 13 per cent increase in extrabudgetary expenditure against the 2021 total).[149]

3.2   Budget trajectory

Since its hasty establishment in 2017,[150] UNOCT's budget trajectory has been one of 'spectacular growth'.[151] It has evolved from the 35 posts of the former CTITF to cover 198 posts as of mid-2022[152] – an increase of more than 550 per cent. At the same time, since the conversion of CTITF's six regular budget posts into eight for UNOCT in 2017, the regular budget for UNOCT has remained static.

3.3   Budget composition

There are several problems with the composition of UNOCT's budget as it stands. One is that '[e]xtrabudgetary resources represent 97 per cent of the total resources for the Office.'[153] This is an unusually high level in the view of all observers.[154] According to some observers, relying on short-term project funding makes long-term planning, integration of cross-cutting issues and policy leadership challenging. UNOCT sees this as a threat to the sustainability of the institution it has built.

A second challenge is the strong influence over the direction and quality of UN counter-terrorism efforts wielded by states with poor track records on respect for human rights, including in the context of counter-terrorism. UNOCT's funding 'overwhelmingly depends on the Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism'.[155] UNOCT's consolidated funding appeal for 2019–20 notes that out of total pledges of $225,965,539, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Russia had contributed $187,250,000 – almost 83 per cent.[156] The long-time Chair of the Trust Fund, Saudi Arabia, has reportedly stymied both diversification of funding sources and the adoption of new guidelines on how funds are spent.[157]

Stemming from the above, the skew towards voluntary contributions from these states via UNCCT results in the disproportionate concentration of UNOCT's resources and programming on capacity building programmes. In 2019, 49 per cent of the 314 projects by Global Compact entities fell under GCTS Pillar III on capacity building.[158] In the 2021–22 multi-year appeal for counter-terrorism, UNOCT claimed the proportion of funds requested per pillar had been significantly rebalanced. However, the author's analysis of budgets requested in the projects suggests that capacity building remains a more significant focus than UNOCT has claimed – with more than 67 per cent of total resources requested focusing on state-centric initiatives for capacity building and combatting terrorism under GCTS Pillars II and III.[159] This imbalance is closely related to many of the problems with UNOCT's direction and performance detailed in Annex 1, regarding neglect for prevention, conditions conducive and human rights aspects of the GCTS, weak theories of change, and limited evidence of impact.

3.4   What is being proposed?

According to the member states negotiating it, the 7th GCTS was intended to lead to simultaneous further consideration of both a budget increase for UNOCT and ways to enhance effectiveness and better integrate human rights, gender and the rule of law into the UN's counter-terrorism work. However, the UNSG and UNOCT have quietly assessed the appropriate budget for UNOCT, and the recommendations from this assessment already inform a request by the SG and UNOCT in the UN's 2023 political affairs budget for more than a seven-fold increase in its number of regular budget posts, with the addition of 49 new posts over two years.[160] The proposed increase would be spread across 2023 and 2024, with an additional 25 regular budget posts for UNOCT in 2023, bringing its total to 33, at a cost of $5,988,200,[161] before a further 24 posts are added to the regular budget in 2024, at a total additional cost of $10 million per year.[162]

In support of this request by the SG, UNOCT has developed a technical assessment that served as the basis for the budget request currently being reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) before it passes to the 5th Committee for final approval.[163]

The additional 25 regular budget posts proposed for 2023 are presented as enabling a 25-post reduction from extrabudgetary posts. The total projected headcount in the 2023 budget is therefore unchanged from 2022 at 198 posts.[164] If approved, extrabudgetary resources would still account for 91.1 per cent of UNOCT's projected 2023 budget.[165]

3.5   The case in favour

In the view of UNOCT, additional regular budget resources are necessary to deliver its mandate, which includes the following issues:

(a) to provide leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General from across the United Nations system
(b) to enhance coordination and coherence across the 38 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force [Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact] entities to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy
(c) to strengthen the delivery of UN counter-terrorism capacity building assistance to member states
(d) to improve visibility, advocacy and resource mobilisation for UN counter-terrorism efforts
(e) to ensure that due priority is given to counter-terrorism across the UN system and that the important work on preventing violent extremism is firmly rooted in the Strategy.[166]

According to a former Member State official who negotiated the GA resolution that created UNOCT, there should have been more regular budget posts put in place to deliver this mandate when UNOCT was created in 2017.[167] In the 2023 UN political affairs budget, the large proposed budget increase is explained with reference to the UNSG and UNOCT's assessment, which takes into account UNOCT's 'mandates, operations and financial situation', and the need to consolidate the architecture's sustainability and help member states address 'existing and emerging threats'.[168] It is claimed that the 'Resource changes result from […] new and expanded mandates. The proposed level of resource provides for the full, efficient and effective implementation of mandates.' However, it is unclear to what 'new and expanded mandates' this refers: despite its expansion due to funding injections by a handful of member states, the mandate of UNOCT has not changed since 2017.

The 2023 political affairs budget does, however, go on to highlight 'increasing requests' for UNOCT's 'services and support' in technical assistance, capacity building, counter-terrorist

financing and 'to enhance coordination and coherence across the [Global] Compact'.[169] Indeed, in the view of UNOCT, the assistance it provides is very popular among member states, and thus the prospect of losing personnel and capacity when and if current voluntary contributions come to an end would be a widely felt disappointment:[170] 'OCT's size is reflective of the level of voracious demand among Member States for what UNOCT does.'[171]

The assessment also identified 'vulnerabilities, including the lack of predictable and regular funding', and stressed UNOCT's 97 per cent reliance on extrabudgetary resources to cover 95.5 per cent of its staff.[172] It is therefore argued, 'predominant dependency on such a model poses considerable challenges to the sustainability of mandate implementation', while the 'very limited' donor base 'carries inherent vulnerabilities for the continued delivery of the institutional mandate'.[173]

According to the 2023 political affairs budget, the same assessment also pointed to 'the need to strengthen programme governance, monitoring and evaluation and information management.'[174] So the 49 additional regular budget posts are proposed both to deliver on UNOCT's five-point mandate and to 'allow for the mainstreaming of functions related to human rights and gender equality and ensure the balanced implementation of the [GCTS] fourth pillar [on human rights]'.[175]

As 'justification for the proposed changes', the 2023 budget includes the proposed creation of a Human Rights and Gender Section within UNOCT, to 'enable the Office to mainstream human rights and a gender perspective […] and support [Global Compact] entities[…] and Member States to effectively implement the [GCTS] fourth pillar'.[176] According to a UNOCT official, this section promotes integration of issues flagged in the 7th GCTS, and "supports the whole office to mainstream these issues".[177] The lack of dependable resources for such posts represents "a limiting factor on how far UNOCT can go in implementing the strategy".[178] However, the UNOCT organigrams for 2022 and 2023 included in the 2023 political affairs budget show the allocation of just 5 regular budget posts to the UNOCT's proposed Human Rights and Gender Section, whereas almost half – 12 of the 25 proposed additional regular budget posts – are allocated to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General.[179]

Budget composition challenges are not necessarily the fault of UNOCT, which arguably merely serves the preferences of the General Assembly and Security Council, and works with what donors are providing in the areas falling under its mandate. In this understanding, it would be up to donors to redress the neglect for programmes under GCTS Pillar IV and the weak integration of performance management, human rights, civil society inclusion and gender concerns. Consequently, putting more of UNOCT's total budget under the regular budget would give member states more scope to assert what the core of UNOCT should focus on.[180] In a similar way, KPMG's 2020 evaluation of UNCCT argues that:

> 'In order to fully fund Gender and Human Rights Units and staff that allow for mainstreaming capacity to be developed and maintained as required and envisioned, UNOCT should seek to place mainstreaming activities on the UN general budget. This will signify their importance, allow for long-term planning delinked from project cycles, and keep them protected from the varying levels of support provided by Member States.'[181]

From UNOCT's perspective, there is also a danger that if current donors discontinue their funding contributions at past levels, it will not be able to maintain the same level of activities and maintain posts that are a part of its 'core' business.[182]

The SG notes that, '28 Member States have expressed support for enhanced regular budget resources for the Office of Counter-Terrorism'.[183] By contrast, only a minority of UN

officials and member states interviewed agreed with the view that more regular budget was needed to make UNOCT less reliant on extrabudgetary contributors' preferences, and to strengthen standards.

3.6 Concerns and considerations

Alongside this rationale, this study has identified several further considerations that need to be weighed regarding the appropriate resourcing of the UN counter-terrorism architecture and its activities.

3.6.1 Impacts of budget composition on theories of change, impact and sustainability

The origin and composition of UNOCT's budget pushes it into 'ad hoc, timebound capacity-building programs', whose 'effect has been to focus more energy and resources on the delivery of capacity building than on effectively coordinating the UN[…] Global Compact'.[184] It also 'makes the UNOCT highly dependent on a handful of donors who provide funds that come with explicit earmarking or implicit expectations and oversight'.[185] For many interviewees, this is problematic because these donors' priorities are 'not in balance with the GCTS', and often focus on themes with a weak theory of change and evidentiary basis, such as sports-based PVE programming.[186] Even UNOCT admits that over-reliance on specific donors undermines its sustainability – a position acknowledged by many of those concerned over its growth and performance.[187]

3.6.2 Navigating 'pay-to-play' dilemmas

The decision by certain member states to bloat a particular UN entity with large-scale funding for flawed programmes does not oblige the GA to prop up the institution with regular budget resources thereafter.[188] To do so would be to validate the 'pay-to-play' dynamic, whereby 'a select number of donors influenc[e] policy priorities', rather than the UN and member states collectively 'allocating funds based on a clearly defined plan that strives for balanced Strategy implementation'.[189]

Although a senior UNOCT official pointed out that they "ha[d]n't seen any evidence of undue influence from Saudis and Qataris",[190] over-dependence on certain donors can expose the UN to undue policy influence more broadly.[191] As Saferworld has argued, to protect its charter and integrity, it could be important to 'find[ ] ways to protect UN institutions and strategies from political currents and funding streams that are pushing the UN into becoming nothing more than a provider of ineffective and potentially harmful services'.[192]

3.6.3 Investing in counter-terrorism requires cutting worse-funded priorities

Several interviewees noted that UNOCT's push for greater regular budget resources could only be achieved if the increase was balanced by cuts elsewhere to the regular budget, to another department or entity.[193] This begs the question of the balance the UN wishes to strike between securitised versus preventative, rights-based and developmental responses to international challenges. Given that conflicts currently cause over 11 times more violent deaths than terrorism per year,[194] as well as a host of development and human rights challenges, it is questionable whether UNOCT should remain more than 70 per cent of the size of the UN's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs – and over seven times the size of the its Peacebuilding Support Office.[195] For one senior official, it needed to be recognised that UNOCT "doesn't have a budget balancing problem[…] they have more funds and sustainability than anyone else".[196]

3.6.4 Investing in the right(s) places

The 7th GCTS:

'underscores the role[…] of [UN] human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review, [UN] human rights treaty bodies, independent special procedures of the Human Rights Council, as well as [OHCHR], including in documenting, analysing and providing recommendations on the human rights aspects of the fight against terrorism.'[197]

In his 2020 report on GCTS implementation, the SG calls multiple times for 'commitment and adequate resourcing' to fund all four pillars of the GCTS, and 'in particular to consider increasing their contributions to the [UN] to enable it to support Member States in implementing pillar IV of the Strategy[…] and to support stronger engagement with civil society'.[198]

Nonetheless, according to numerous reports and interviewees, OHCHR's budget has long been insufficient to enable it to implement GCTS Pillar IV and assist in the integration of human rights across GCTS implementation by Global Compact entities.[199] So, even those member states who see merits to UNOCT's case may see more pressing needs elsewhere, especially given that:

'The asymmetry of priorities of Strategy implementation reflects the wider systemic imbalance among the United Nations' three pillars, where the human rights pillar receives only 3.7 per cent of the total UN budget.'[200]

Similarly, as the SG has argued:

'Ensuring gender equality needs to be integral to these [GCTS implementation] efforts. Progress in gender-sensitive analysis of the drivers of terrorism, including to understand the role of misogyny and the roles of women and girls in terrorism and prevention, is positive but insufficient. Counter-terrorism efforts have to uphold women's rights and enable their meaningful participation, while avoiding their instrumentalization.'[201]

Member states may wish to consider whether new investments in UNOCT or UN Women would be more impactful to ensure effective action on this priority.

3.6.5   How to address neglect for human rights under GCTS Pillar IV?

There are doubts over UNOCT's commitment to redressing the imbalance of UN counter-terrorism activity and neglect for Pillar IV of the GCTS in accordance with its mandate. Only 7 out of 60 projects in the 2019–20 consolidated funding appeal fell under Pillar IV.[202] Although UNOCT highlights strategic responsiveness of the project portfolio to needs identified in CTED assessments,[203] some commentators criticised the absence of a clear strategic direction underpinning the appeal.[204] One member state criticised the "very top down" process for the appeal's development: "UNOCT decides where it wants to do projects, asks country teams to send ideas and then lumps them together."[205] As one UN official observed, "We are still struggling to come up with specific projects focused on pillars I and IV.[…] we need to brainstorm on other ways to have a positive impact on human rights problems in this field – shrinking of civic space, misuse of counter-terror measures, abuses by law enforcement and security services."[206]

In this context, as a member state put it, "OCT has really dropped the ball on identifying good human rights activities." As a UN official interviewed starkly observed, "Research has repeatedly confirmed that a securitised approach aggravates the problem – but still 60 per cent of the budget goes entirely on hard security measures."[207] With such an approach to fund-raising, the composition of UNOCT's budget, and unbalanced implementation of the GCTS, will remain problems regardless of its regular budget allocation.

Box 3: Orientation of UN counter-terrorism efforts in consolidated multi-year appeals for counter-terrorism

The orientation and quality of many the projects presented under the consolidated appeal for 2019–20 are questionable: support was urged in many cases based on 'threat inflation' (for example, regarding foreign terrorist fighters in Central Asia or returnees in the Maldives).[208] Also, presumably because of the challenges the UN faces in pushing sensitive issues with highly unequal and authoritarian member states, many projects fall into the 'pacification and control' trap of trying to change the minds of 'vulnerable/marginalised' youth and communities, without changing their lives by improving opportunities and tackling governance problems.

Although some projects include elements on promoting rights-based and community-based approaches to law enforcement and detention reforms, many focus on national PVE action plans, media counter-messaging, surveillance/early warning and encouraging ideological change/social harmony, while few directly or credibly address issues that cause, and thus have a high potential to reduce, conflict and violence in the contexts covered. Where they do so, they often frame the problem as one of weak state capacity to be addressed through 'train-and-equip' programmes, rather than abuse, impunity and social erosion – whose remedy may lie in genuine societal empowerment and state–society bargaining and accountability/reporting processes.[209]

Meanwhile, as noted, only 7 out of 60 projects in the 2019–20 consolidated funding appeal fall under Pillar IV. In the 2021–22 multi-year appeal for counter-terrorism, the UN claims the proportion of funds requested per pillar has been significantly rebalanced. However, the author's analysis of budgets requested in the projects suggests that capacity building remains a more significant focus than the UN has claimed, and that neglect for human rights under Pillar IV remains a significant problem.

Breakdown of funds requested in UN 2021-2022 multi-year appeal for counterterrorism by GCTS Pillar: UN claim versus independent assessment ($ millions)
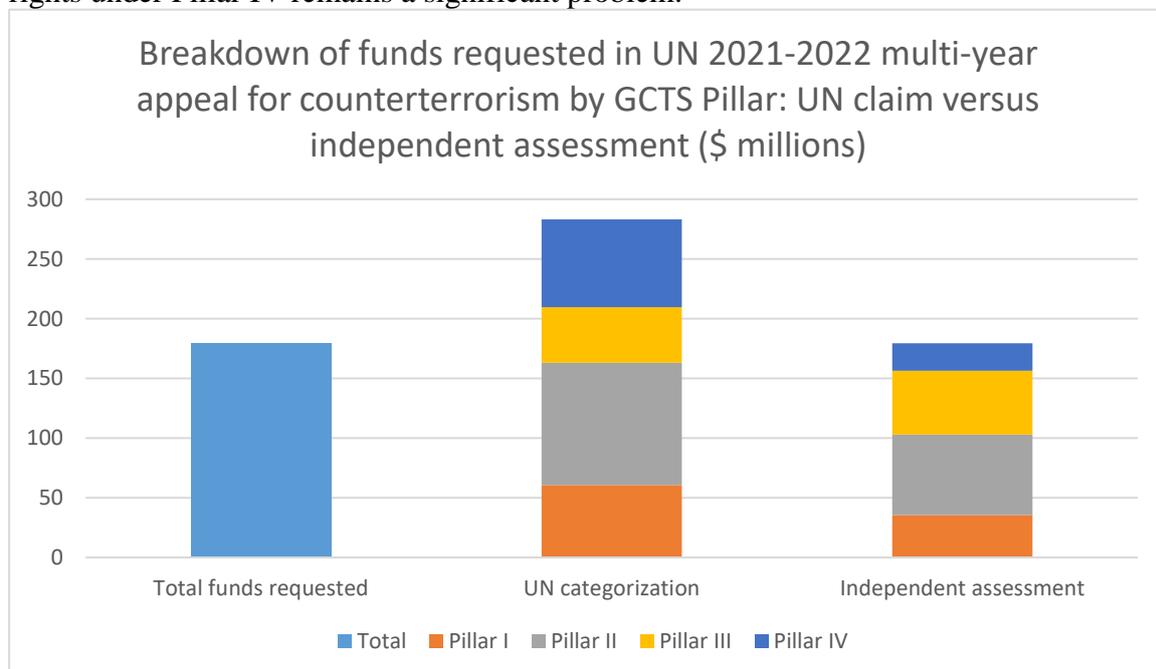
Source: Author's statistical analysis of: UN (no date), '2021-2022 United Nations Multi-Year Appeal for Counter-Terrorism' (project summaries provided to author by UNOCT; further non-downloadable information on the UN 2021–22 consolidated appeal is available via a portal: https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/MYA-2021-2022; UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (no date), '2021-2022 United Nations Multi-Year Appeal for Counter-Terrorism' (promotional flyer provided to author by UNOCT.

The author's analysis shows that, whereas the UN claims that $73.5 million (41 per cent) of the requested funds would go towards supporting Pillar IV implementation, a generous assessment would place this figure closer to 13 per cent – with more than 67 per cent of total resources requested focusing on state-centric initiatives for capacity building and combatting terrorism under GCTS Pillars II and III.

Many of the projects that do contribute to Pillar IV focus on supporting victims of terrorism and rights-compliant handling of terror suspects/convicts. Therefore, few tackle counter-terrorism related rights abuses that are known to be significant drivers of terrorism (except in the claimed human rights-based approach to many of the security and justice train-and-equip projects profiled). Only 5 of the 52 projects unequivocally adopt a community-based approach, while community engagement aspects are to a certain degree present in 9 others (but with risks of promoting co-optation rather than genuine empowerment). Consequently, while in the consolidated appeal for 2021 to 2022 the UN claims to adopt a much greater emphasis on conditions conducive, prevention and human rights – and a reduced focus on capacity building – its claim does not hold up to independent scrutiny, and familiar problems persist.

3.6.6 Resourcing better contextualised, more impactful responses

Another concern articulated by both the Global Center and numerous interviewees was how control of resources by UNOCT, and the scale of its programme implementation, detracted from its coordination role and collaboration with Global Compact entities.[210] So a crucial budgetary question is whether the current budgeting model is supporting coordinated, field-led engagement by RCs and UN country teams in line with the SG's reforms and optimal models for conflict prevention and mitigation. Thus:

> 'Currently, the separate priorities and funding sources that are attached to counterterrorism and PVE projects[…] have siloed counterterrorism activities from broader conflict prevention efforts.'[211]

For another official interviewed, UNOCT's budget and increasing profile as a programme implementer was also problematic when viewed through the prism of localisation: the GCTS seeks to counteract groups that "may have a global agenda but also are rooted in local context". This requires a response that is "deeply localised and contextualised", yet "this is completely missing in an organisation that comes top down".[212]

As one UN official interviewed commented: "Another point of view is: 'Why give more if there are so many problems?'"[213]

4 Grant-making powers

4.1 What has been proposed?

The SG's 2021 update report on GCTS implementation flagged that, 'Member States may wish…to confer upon the Office of Counter-Terrorism the same mandate that other United Nations entities have to provide grants in support of projects related to preventing and countering terrorism.'[214]

4.2 Rationale

According to a senior UNOCT official, the request for grant-making authority emerged in part because UNOCT had sought to provide equipment to a beneficiary in the course of a programme to prevent the radicalisation of violent prisoners, only to be informed it had no specific authority to do so by Legal Affairs.[215] If member states bestow grant-making powers on UNOCT, this would arguably enable it to:

- reduce the lengthy time spent developing cooperation agreements with other UN entities
- save on the transaction costs of passing funds via other entities
- accelerate delivery in line with donor expectations
- work in closer partnership with civil society
- make grants to non-UN organisations who are accredited as observers to the General Assembly

According to UNOCT, after member states instructed the SG to explore the issue further in the 7th GCTS, the delay in authorising UNOCT's grant-making powers is forcing it to continue working with other agencies, making things slower and more expensive, and making it harder for it to engage with CSOs.[216] In support of UNOCT's argument, one independent expert also suggested that grant-making powers could be beneficial if UNOCT was making grants and providing equipment in follow-up to and alignment with CTED recommendations.[217]

4.3 Considerations

Alongside these arguments in favour of UNOCT's proposal, as noted in previous sections, there are concerns over the UN's direction, performance and coherence in relation to counter-terrorism. There are widely held views that UNOCT has grown too fast, with big questions over the quality of its programming, and its focus on prevention, peace, gender equality, human rights and civil society inclusion. Both among other Global Compact agencies, and among country teams, concerns are echoed over the way UNOCT interacts with other parts of the UN system, with whom, it is claimed, it should collaborate more in designing programmes, and to whom it should cede more leadership and resources in order to respect comparative advantages and expertise.

As one UN official noted, "I worry about UNOCT becoming paymaster of everyone."[218] Another official in a senior role worried that "making UNOCT the central bank" could be "a death knell for smaller entities".[219] A third UN official raised questions over the integrity and transparency with which UNOCT currently handles decisions on how to invest global counter-terrorism trust fund resources across Global Compact entities.[220] And a fourth added that "[w]hen it comes to giving money to others, UNOCT doesn't have the objective perspective that we'd hope to see."[221] According to a member state representative, providing grant-making authority to UNOCT would risk creating "a monster in the field": "[UN]OCT doesn't have an incentive to work together in the field with their UN partners, and direct grant-making will not solve this problem."[222]

The acquisition of grant-making powers could exacerbate all these perceived problems. With grant-making powers, UNOCT:

- may be able to attract and expend more resources, worsening the perceived power and resource imbalance vis-à-vis other Global Compact entities, whose hand should be strengthened as part of any move toward balanced GCTS implementation
- may be freer to bypass Global Compact entities and country teams to deliver programmes with less need for intra-UN collaboration and coordination. Comparative advantages and useful checks and balances provided by the procedures and experiences of other entities may be discarded
- may also be more able to partner with regional and international organisations whose record on human rights while countering terrorism is of grave concern and may present reputational risks to the wider UN system – in particular, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, but concerns may also relate to the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the African Union, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and so on[223]

UNOCT claims that grant-making authority would enable it to avoid lengthy and costly processes to develop cooperation agreements with other UN agencies, so saving donor funds that currently go towards costs deducted by other UN entities for handling these funds. However, this claim warrants scrutiny: if UNOCT were to develop its own procurement, due diligence and financial control infrastructure to bypass the systems that UNDP and others have developed over past decades, this too would incur costs and be time-consuming. As an experienced UN official explained:

> "[UN]OCT is new to the process of delivering grants and sits in the secretariat which is very bureaucratic. It would be better off if that money was flowing to UNICEF or UNDP and they were just advising on the specific technical issues. For them to become a swift grant-making entity they would need to learn huge amounts of lessons from, for example, OCHA [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] which manages emergency cash grants and country pooled funds but based on 25 years of experience and thus knowledge of how to navigate the legal frameworks. UNDP is also quite agile so UNOCT could have a joint programme with UNDP to handle it...[UNOCT] would have to build a big bureaucracy if it doesn't go into partnership with another actor that already has this in place."[224]

In particular, a sophisticated set of checks and balances would be required in relation to UNOCT's wish to acquire the authority to provide equipment as part of its capacity building programming. Such activity would entail scrutiny, in light of HRDDP and potentially other international laws and regulations relating to the control of arms and dual-use goods. Counter-terrorism security capacity building programmes are notorious for their poor design, their failure to achieve maintainable positive impacts, and their risks of feeding into conflict, governance and human rights challenges.[225] In this regard, it must be recalled that UNOCT is involved in security capacity building in an array of highly repressive contexts.[226]

Even so, regardless of the development of regional satellite offices, UNOCT will inevitably remain much more distant from programme partners than other Global Compact entities with substantive field presence, which are thus likely to remain much better placed to handle procurement and partner selection in relevant national and local-level programming. So for some UN officials, it would be better for UNOCT to focus on collaboration, coordination and expert advice, while "taking advantage of skills and proximity to the ground of other agencies".[227] For a member state interviewee, another important issue was that "other UN

delivery agencies have better processes, theories of change and M&E systems in place…this creates a check and balance".[228]

UNOCT also asserts that grant-making ability would enable it to upgrade its civil society engagement and pursue its ambition of closer partnerships with CSOs. Here, interviewees and the literature review raised concerns that UNOCT had not yet been fully transparent regarding its proposed approach to engage with civil society, and that the abridged engagement strategy it had shared fell short of UN standards and was based on insufficient civil society consultation.[229] Regarding grant-making, relevant concerns in this area relate to fears that UNOCT:

- could fail to implement UN guidelines on civic space
- may pursue partnerships with civil society groups aligned with governments responsible for violating human rights in the name of countering terrorism
- may concentrate its engagement with civil society on programme models with weak theories of change
- could use grant-making powers to co-opt civil society as mere service providers in support of national security agendas in repressive contexts
- may not champion greater protection for civil society and empowerment of human rights defenders working to counteract systemic abuses of human rights and the shutdown of civic space in the name of counter-terrorism.

Many CSOs thus oppose UNOCT's request for grant-making powers and doubt that its approval would strengthen the ability of civil society to contribute to the pursuit of Pillars I and IV of the GCTS. A majority of the UN officials interviewed, as well as multiple member state representatives, echoed civil society concerns on this point.[230] One commented that, "[u]ntil UNOCT shows willingness to engage and consult in a meaningful way with CSOs, giving it grant-making authority risks enabling UNOCT to instrumentalise civil society."[231] Another UN official went further, stating , "this would be disastrous…it would open the floodgates to manipulation".[232] A third asked: "Grants for whom? GONGOs [government-sponsored non-governmental organisations]?"[233]

Many CSOs therefore remain significantly more confident about the comparative advantage of other Global Compact entities to engage with civil society in a genuinely supportive and empowering way, one that is duly aware of the human rights challenges to be overcome under Pillars I and IV of the GCTS.

Given this range of significant concerns over the implications of providing UNOCT with grant-making authority, more than two-thirds of UN officials and almost all member state representatives interviewed suggested rejecting the proposal. One official encouraged member states to ask, "[b]efore UNOCT gets more capacity to make grants, has it earnt it and shown that it functions well enough?…If the foundation is not right, then adding this power is not a good idea."[234] Another agreed, arguing that, "[b]efore UNOCT is vested with that authority, it needs to show that in its internal management it can improve attention to underserved areas like human rights."[235]

5   Options and recommendations

Based on the evidence and analysis presented in sections 1–4, this report provides six overall recommendations. To elaborate on these, this section unpacks the options available to member states and officials and, where relevant, provides more detailed suggestions to consider.

5.1   Tackling significant concerns: change management

> **Overall recommendation 1:** The persistence and seriousness of concerns over the direction and performance of the UN on counter-terrorism issues suggest the need for a **strategic review and reset**, followed by a significant **process of change management**, across the UN's emerging and fast-growing counter-terrorism architecture. This must be a prior step *before* partners consider redirecting resources and assigning new competencies to UNOCT.

Noting the concerns elaborated in section 1 and Annex 1, this should address issues around leadership, culture and inclusive approaches, and focus on peace, rights and development solutions, guidance, standards, oversight, risk management and results orientation. It should seek to establish a better balance between UN counter-terrorism institutions and architecture and other UN priorities, approaches and agencies.

5.2   Oversight and effectiveness

In this area, the report identified the following **options to consider**:

> *Option A: Proactively **follow through on existing processes** to enhance effectiveness and results-oriented management within the UN counter-terrorism architecture via UNOCT and the Global Compact.*

This option would involve continuing to rely on the capacities, standards and procedures for oversight and performance management summarised in Annex 2, ideally building on the strengths of the existing system. It would include strengthening units and bodies responsible for M&E and integration of key issues, and standardising and regularising best practices such as independent audits and evaluations to make them more results oriented and comprehensive. However, by accepting status-quo arrangements for control over and delivery of such processes, this option would risk perpetuating the significant weaknesses and conflicts of interest that undermine the effectiveness of the UN's counter-terrorism architecture and generate reputational risks.

> *Option B: Embrace a **step change** towards significantly improved impacts and better risk management, including by creating and resourcing an internal UN oversight and effectiveness function, independent from but working closely with UNOCT and other Global Compact entities.*

This option would involve embarking on a more comprehensive approach to improving results orientation, oversight and risk management. It would build on and work with the best performing elements of the existing architecture, while tackling core challenges, such as conflicts of interest and M&E failures, by injecting greater independence, inclusivity and best practices from across the UN system in critical areas.

> *Option C: Create and resource a **human rights ombudsperson** to oversee all UN counter-terrorism programming and outputs, with powers to uphold safeguards and standards, prevent and mitigate harm, and uphold the UN's reputation.*

Building on other examples within and beyond the UN system, this option would supplement options A or B by establishing a wholly independent mechanism to uphold human rights standards across all UN counter-terrorism work. This could be achieved by preventing harm and ensuring accountability and redress for harms that could be generated or reinforced by that work.

Having thoroughly explored these options considering the available evidence and perspectives of those consulted, the report makes two overall recommendations:

Overall recommendation 2: As an essential *pre-condition before* any additional resource investments, member states should require the UN system to make **a step change in results orientation, oversight and risk management** for all of its counter-terrorism work under the GCTS, including by establishing an internal oversight and review mechanism that is:

- fully **inclusive** of civil society
- **independent** of but supported by UNOCT and the Global Compact
- backed by a **credible, comprehensive and inclusively developed theory of change and results framework** to ensure balanced GCTS implementation
- fed by an **upgraded system-wide approach to M&E** on all relevant programmes that is robust, independent and focused on outcomes
- supported to ensure all entities **follow applicable UN standards and manage risks**

Overall recommendation 3: Member states should require the UN to **eliminate any perceived conflicts of interest** in the management and oversight of its counter-terrorism work – including self-serving strategy and programme evaluation practices, the assignation of resource mobilisation and M&E responsibilities to the same entities and units, and undue influence by particular member states over its direction and performance.

To pursue the significantly stronger **results orientation, oversight and risk management** that is needed, the SG and member states should adopt bold action to reform existing oversight, risk management and performance mechanisms, and innovate where weaknesses, inefficiencies and risks are uncovered. They should be ever cautious about eroding useful elements, creating duplication or causing inefficiency.

If it can be politically and administratively arranged, a new performance management and oversight mechanism should **cover all relevant UN activity**, including both: the GCTS and implementing bodies under the authority of the GA; and UN activities and bodies pursuant to counter-terrorism-related Security Council resolutions. However, if this cannot be agreed, it should not stymie enhanced oversight of GA-mandated counter-terrorism activities.

The required step change in the oversight, results orientation and risk management of all UN counter-terrorism related activities should involve:

1. Ensuring mechanisms are 'fit for purpose' by guaranteeing the **dual aims** of both **safeguarding** the UN's reputation and preventing harm, and **strengthening effectiveness**.
2. Care not to duplicate or undermine, but rather to **strengthen and provide required resources to, the best-performing elements** of the existing oversight arrangements, including OHCHR, the SR-HRCT and UN Women.
3. Reconceiving and reconstituting oversight structures to **eliminate current conflicts of interest** and prevent undue influence from member states with poor records on human rights.

- Even if it remains internal to the UN system, in line with existing UN best practices, this means establishing an **independent oversight structure**, sitting outside the Office of Counter-Terrorism, and insulated from intra-agency or donor-driven pressures to 'sugar-coat' impact evaluations or stymie human rights-based approaches.
- The independent oversight structure needs to have a continual role in **risk management** – with powers to intercede in cases where there is a risk of doing harm or damaging the UN's reputation – and act as a **focal point for ensuring applicable standards** such as HRDDP are met across programmes.
- Given the widespread calls for trusted and even-handed leadership and oversight to strengthen effectiveness, **the SG and his Executive Office should consider taking a more proactive role** in managing and overseeing UN counter-terrorism efforts. He should either establish a **human rights ombudsperson** or appoint an **independent reviewer or panel of experts** to eliminate conflicts of interest, provide oversight and deliver results-oriented, independent progress studies on GCTS implementation.
- If appointed, the independent reviewer/panel of experts should chair and draw on a **board consisting of a limited number of senior expert performance management focal points from Global Compact agencies** who are implementing significant volumes of relevant programmes or playing an important oversight role. The board should include one member each from UNOCT, CTED, UNDP, UNODC, UN Women, OHCHR and the SR-HRCT's office. This independent reviewer/panel and its board could sit above, task and receive input from the Global Compact's working group on M&E.
- The independent reviewer/panel of experts/ombudsperson should act as a **standing review body to monitor performance and compliance issues** within day-to-day UN counter-terrorism activities, and **ensure no harm** is being done in the UN's name. It should raise concerns with relevant senior staff across Global Compact entities and, where appropriate, with the SG.
- The SG should commission the independent reviewer/panel of experts to undertake **independent progress studies on the GCTS** and its implementation that the GA should review **every four years**. Extending the GCTS review period from two to four years would allow the UN system and member states time to implement each iteration, reflect meaningfully on performance, consult one another and civil society within different regions and on different themes, and **make GCTS reviews less politicised and more evidence- and issue-driven**.

4. Integrating counter-terrorism efforts within the current drive to 'upgrade the UN' via **results orientation**, to focus on whether the objectives of the GCTS are being fulfilled and what adjustments may be needed to tackle problems, manage risks and strengthen effectiveness. This requires:
   - **Concentrating monitoring, evaluations, and GCTS and other strategic reviews on the independently assessed achievement of outcomes.** This means scrutinising real-world changes in the objective situation, policies, laws and capacities to solve the problem, and public perceptions of progress achieved as a result of counter-terrorism activities, using the dozens of existing indicators that measure relevant issues, and routinely consulting with civil society and credible, open-source research as part of M&E processes.
   - Assessing outcomes against a **comprehensive GCTS theory of change and outcome framework,** with strategic objectives, outcomes and indicators across the four pillars. This would mean, in particular, fully taking into account impacts of counter-terrorism

efforts on human rights, conflict, gender dynamics, civic space and civil society inclusion.

- **Significantly improving – including via civil society consultation – the draft GCTS theory of change and results framework** that is currently under development by UN entities within the Global Compact, to ensure balanced focus on prevention, peacebuilding, human rights and gender equality outcomes and indicators.
- **Standardising, aligning and optimising counter-terrorism- and PVE-related design, M&E practices** across the UN system. This in turn involves:
  - ensuring due focus on and **proper monitoring of prevention, conditions conducive, human rights and gender equality** within all GCTS-relevant programmes and initiatives undertaken by Global Compact entities
  - adopting routine, truly **independent evaluation processes** as standard at the programme and project levels
  - **aligning with best practices from within the peacebuilding and human rights fields,** by adopting participatory evaluation methodologies that focus on partners' perceptions of the achievement of outcomes (with the overall comprehensive GCTS results framework providing a point of reference along with other thematic and country-relevant frameworks, and a link to monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 16+ indicators, to underline the connectivity between counter-terrorism success and progress on peace, rights, development and equality, as set out in SDG16+)

5. More routine **application of tools and safeguards to integrate UN standards** and best practices on human rights, gender equality, civic space and civil society engagement, and to mitigate risks and prevent harm. This in turn requires:
   - **Creating and funding posts focusing on these issues, filling them with credible expertise, and housing them within entities with credible orientation** and a reputation for championing these issues. On human rights, this means OHCHR and the SR-HRCT, which are critically under-resourced to play their essential role; regarding gender integration, this means UN Women; and so on. Human rights expertise is also lacking in UNOCT field presences.
   - Ensuring – possibly via secondment or through adjustments in management structures – that holders of such posts have **access to UNOCT, and clout within the bureaucracy, to ensure integration of relevant issues** at the design, implementation, and M&E stages.
   - **Reducing pressure on the SR-HRCT, OHCHR and UN Women by ensuring other elements of the UN system play a more proactive role** in upholding and promoting human rights, good governance and sustaining peace as the foundation of just, effective and sustainable counter-terrorism.

6. Upholding and monitoring standards required under the UN system-wide Guidance Note on **Protection and Promotion of Civic Space**, and integrating **much more routine engagement with civil society** into the UN's working culture and approach related to counter-terrorism at all levels, in particular:
   - **in the areas of design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, adaptation and learning**
   - within markedly more **inclusive GCTS reviews** and other processes
   - via the practice of **wide solicitations** (down to country level) for input, with **ample notice, extensive consultation and conscientious incorporation of feedback**

7. Integrating **better analysis of gender dynamics into programme design**, and actively **monitoring and evaluating programmes to ensure they prioritise and advance gender equality**, tackle gendered power imbalances, and avoid undermining the rights of

women and other gender minorities, making full use of tools such as UN Women's 'Gender marker guidance note'.

8. Ensuring greater **coherence** in UN counter-terrorism efforts by **bringing UNOCT into the UN's Sustainable Development Group and its 'Management and Accountability Framework'**. Alternatively, achieving coherence by **agreeing separate standards** to ensure UNOCT complements country teams' approach and does not bypass the contextual knowledge, guidance, quality control and oversight that RCs and other members of the in-country sustainable development group provide.

5.3 Appropriate resourcing

Member states with concerns over any immediate increase in UNOCT's regular budget allocation may wish to consider the following **options**, some of which could be applied in combination:

> ***Option A: Increase UNOCT's allocation in the regular UN budget for 2023, but with closely monitored conditions*** *on the use of these resources for: oversight, safeguards and results orientation; rebalancing to implementation of the human rights, prevention and conditions conducive pillars; and the integration of a gender-transformative approach.*

This option is based on the view that if any regular budget resources were to be added, they should be used for enhancing effectiveness and integrating human rights, the rule of law, gender and prevention. Used in this way, an increased regular budget could help to better regulate extrabudgetary programming.

Without the addition of dependable resources, many observers fear the integration of human rights, gender equality and civil society inclusion will not happen. However, noting the unsatisfactory nature of UNOCT's existing work on gender, human rights and civil society inclusion, this option could prove problematic should UNOCT merely expand further without better integrating human rights or gender considerations.

> ***Option B****: Increase regular budget resources in the United Nations programme budget for 2023 for counter-terrorism efforts – but* ***allocate additional capacities and authorities across important Global Compact agencies,*** *with relevant capacities and responsibility to implement the GCTS.*

The GCTS is a blueprint for what the UN system can do on counter-terrorism. While UNOCT has a special role in it and on coordination, it is not the sole entity involved. So, as others have pointed out, it will be important for UNOCT to embrace coordination and collaboration and check its ambition to grow implementation capacity and field presence.[236] It should also seek more input on its own programmes from across the Global Compact.[237] Regardless of levels of investment in UNOCT, it was argued that its field-based implementation capacity could never match the depth of contextual knowledge, know-how and partnership approaches that other large UN field agencies can provide.

In line with this thinking, under this option, the budget should be discussed not as what UNOCT gets but about what the system gets as a whole.[238] Budget investments would therefore be spread across relevant Global Compact agencies, and would focus on local-level delivery to people rather than investments in headquarters. Attention would be on addressing conditions conducive to terrorism and promoting human rights, in particular through peace, human rights and development support, which UNDP, UNODC, UN Women, OHCHR, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs/Peacebuilding Support Office/Peacebuilding Fund (DPPA/PBSO/PBF) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) are most strongly placed to deliver.[239]

Option C: Increase budgets not earmarked as counter-terrorism funding for other UN entities at the frontline of prevention, gender equality, development and human rights work, as an investment in balanced GCTS implementation and support for the SG's reforms, including but not limited to DPPA/PBSO/PBF, UNDP, UN Women, OHCHR and UNODC.

An important rationale for favouring this option – a variant on option C but with the additional resources not earmarked for counter-terrorism, and therefore less at risk of securitisation – is that the drive to increase UNOCT's regular budget can be seen as part of a drive by certain member states in the 5th Committee to move funds out of those parts of the UN that most effectively promote human rights. This shifts the system in significant ways and is hard to reverse.[240]

Option D: Delay any regular budget increase for UNOCT until independent oversight and results-based management has addressed underperformance and GCTS non-implementation issues.

This option does not reject a budget increase to support GCTS implementation altogether, but insists that UN entities should first integrate civil society consultation, human rights and gender equality concerns as standard practice rather than optional extras.[241] If current capacities and resources in UNOCT do not support this, it can be argued that the UN should draw more on expertise in other specialised Global Compact entities.[242]

Option E: Address unbalanced UNOCT budget composition by setting more robust rules on the composition of voluntary contributions to the UN's counter-terrorism activities and trust fund (minimum percentages for allocation across GCTS pillars, plus higher costs for core/general management costs and integration of cross-cutting issues) and improving cost recovery within specific project budgets.

All organisations delivering international assistance are facing pressure on unrestricted funds, given the preference of many donors to channel resources through restricted funding modalities. Most organisations delivering international assistance therefore need to sustain themselves by enhancing the quality of budget composition for restricted funding applications and negotiating firmly with donors, so that voluntarily funded programme and project budgets recover their full delivery costs. In response, all organisations face sustainability challenges if they fail to integrate appropriate costs for core/general management support and to integrate the cross-cutting issues and monitoring, evaluation and oversight practices that uphold the quality of their work and safeguard them from causing harm and inflicting reputational damage.

In keeping with UN requirements, UNOCT currently uses 13.5 percent of project budgets for programme support costs, using some of these funds to underwrite its human rights and gender sections in order to ensure human rights and gender perspectives are mainstreamed into all of its programmes. However, it views the idea of expanding its recovery of core costs and funding more balanced GCTS implementation by improving cost recovery within project budgets and setting stricter rules on trust fund contributions as unworkable. This view is formed on two observations: first, major donors place conditions on how their contributions can be used; second, fluctuations in the level of project funding – and thus of associated programme support costs – could undermine the level of dependable core management and cross-cutting support UNOCT can provide.[243] Those favouring this option would disagree with this view, arguing that it should be a condition on all contributions to the UN counter-terrorism trust fund that donors support balanced expenditure between the GCTS pillars and cover their fair share of costs for core and cross-cutting issues.[244] This is an important option, as no other option provides a model for consistently and sustainably resourcing high UN

standards of counter-terrorism programme delivery in proportion to volatile extrabudgetary funding levels – nor for reorienting the counter-terrorism trust fund towards balanced GCTS implementation.

Option F: Ensure future consolidated appeals better promote balanced implementation of the GCTS and are developed more jointly between Global Compact entities, including CTED, RCs and UN country teams, drawing fully on the specialisms, capacity and contextual presence of all entities.[245]

In line with the analysis above, another promising avenue for redressing the unbalanced composition of UNOCT's budget and approach to GCTS implementation would be to adopt a more inclusive and bottom-up approach to the development of future consolidated appeals.

By analysing the available evidence and perspectives of those consulted, this report provides two overall recommendations:

Overall recommendation 4: Member states should **reject UNOCT's 2022 request for a seven-fold regular budget increase** and **pursue other viable options** to tackle unbalanced implementation, underperformance and sustainability questions – including via setting more **robust rules on the composition of voluntary contributions, ensuring better cost-recovery within project budgets** and **improving the orientation and quality of consolidated appeals**.

Overall recommendation 5: If member states do decide to increase resources for UN counter-terrorism efforts, they should:

- **allocate these to other Global Compact entities** (that is, to those with more credible approaches to core issues such as OHCHR, SR-HRCT, UN Women, UNDP and UNODC) rather than UNOCT
- **insist on the use of any additional resources for oversight, safeguards, results orientation and rebalancing** implementation of the GCTS's pillars on human rights, prevention and addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, as well as integration of a gender-transformative approach.

Other than increasing UNOCT's **budget** as a way to tackle unbalanced implementation, underperformance and sustainability questions, the key options for member states to consider thus involve:

- Setting more **robust rules on composition of voluntary contributions** to the UN's counter-terrorism activities and trust fund, to prevent voluntary contributions from blowing GCTS implementation off course, and **improving the quality of project budgets**, to ensure proper cost recovery by UNOCT and others. Member states should consider establishing fixed minimum percentages for allocation across GCTS pillars, and insisting that project budgets can only be approved if they cover the full costs of integrating cross-cutting issues.
- Requiring that future **consolidated appeals** are more **inclusively developed among Global Compact entities and promote a more strategic, balanced, human rights-based vision** for implementation of the GCTS.

The report has revealed the widespread concern over over-concentration of resources in the hands of UNOCT, when other entities have better capacities to deliver credible and comprehensive responses. Consequently, if member states do decide to increase resources for UN counter-terrorism efforts, it would make sense for them to **allocate equal or greater additional resources to other important Global Compact entities** (in particular OHCHR,

SR-HRCT, UN Women, UNDP and UNODC) rather than UNOCT. To redress and avoid the undue centring of counter-terrorism approaches within UN response strategies, any such additional **allocations should be earmarked for prevention, gender equality, human rights and sustainable development** efforts rather than for counter-terrorism.

If any additional resources are allocated to UNOCT's regular budget, their **use for oversight, safeguards, results orientation and rebalancing** towards human rights, prevention and gender equality (rather than to bloat the Office of the Under-Secretary-General) would need to be **carefully stipulated and scrutinised** in follow-up.

5.4   Grant-making authority

In this area, the report has identified the following **options to consider**:

> ***Option A:*** *Reject UNOCT's request for grant-making authority, while encouraging it to enhance its collaboration with other UN entities with the necessary grant-making powers and approaches.*

This option would accept the view that there is no overall benefit from providing UNOCT with grant-making authority in a context where administering this function would prove costly, inefficient and risky, duplicate financial and administrative capacities already well developed in other entities, and lessen necessary incentives for UNOCT to collaborate with entities with the optimal field presence and approaches to deliver the GCTS.

> ***Option B:*** *Delay any decision on grant-making authority until performance management and oversight questions have been addressed, and then consider providing grant-making authority only if strict conditions are put in place to manage relevant risks.*

This option would involve remaining open to exploring grant-making authority as and when the right conditions are in place for it to add value.

In response, this report recommends:

> **Overall recommendation 6:** Member states should **avoid providing UNOCT with grant-making authority** unless and until it addresses the serious and widely shared concerns over its direction, oversight and performance management, as highlighted in this report. To avoid establishing costly and risk-fraught parallel systems, member states should instead encourage UNOCT to upgrade and streamline its collaboration with other Global Compact entities that are already specialised in grant-making and local programme delivery.

If grant-making authority were pushed through despite the above concerns, it would be vital that this be done only with **strict conditions** in place. These conditions would involve:

- **The application of HRDDP – as well as relevant international laws, embargoes and regulations** regarding transfers of arms and dual-use goods and 'do-no-harm' principles – to any and all UNOCT grants of financial support, expertise, equipment or other assistance, including in the context of capacity building support.
- **Full compliance with the cross-UN Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space.**[246] This would be to ensure that all engagement, consultations and partnerships with civil society are respectful, inclusive and supportive. It would help enable civil society to work independently, without constraint or fear of reprisals, while promoting peace, human rights and good governance. It would also support civil society to address conditions conducive to the use of terror tactics, discourage the abuse of human rights while countering terrorism, and promote respect for human rights in line with the GCTS.

- **Thorough M&E**. Regardless of the decision on grant-making authority, UN engagement with civil society on counter-terrorism and PVE issues should be closely monitored and evaluated to uphold its quality and its impacts on civic space and people's enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in line with the Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space. Such M&E should carefully scrutinise the risk of UNOCT and other UN entities instrumentalising CSOs in support of the national security agenda of governments that abuse human rights while countering terrorism.

Annex 1: Concerns with current UN counter-terrorism architecture

This annex elaborates on the increasingly widespread concerns over the direction and performance of the UN on counter-terrorism issues referred to in Section 1 of the report.

1. Risks of reinforcing overly militarised and securitised counter-terrorism responses

As then-Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon pointed out in his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in 2015**, '**[o]ver the past two decades, the international community has sought to address violent extremism primarily within the context of security-based counter-terrorism measures.'[247] He pointedly flagged the danger of 'overly broad application of counter-terrorism measures' and 'repressive policies and practices which violate human rights and the rule of law'.[248] Yet, as the current SG pointed out in his 2020 report on GCTS implementation:

> '[T]he collective response of the international community still largely focuses on indispensable yet short-term security and military responses to contain it.'[249]

In the context of such problems, the orientation of the UN counter-terrorism architecture, and UNOCT in particular, towards security capacity building is seen by many observers as problematic, and as connected to a wider geopolitical push to undermine multilateral support for human rights and democratic institutions in the face of rising authoritarianism.[250]

2. Neglect for prevention, peacebuilding and human rights

By contrast, as the SG pointed out in his 2020 report on GCTS implementation, to address the threat of terrorism:

> 'it is necessary to focus on building peaceful, inclusive and prosperous societies, based on the rule of law, human rights and sustainable development. Resolute and proportionate responses against terrorist threats…need to be complemented by mid- to long-term investments in prevention and developing resilience. Member States need strong institutions and effective governance to deny terrorists and their criminal supporters the space to operate and to bring them to justice…These efforts also need to be integrated with the pursuit of sustainable development, the sustaining peace agenda and human rights.'[251]

Despite this, there is still little evidence of human rights being 'up front' in UN counter-terrorism practice. By August 2019, just seven per cent of the 314 projects being implemented by Global Compact entities focused on Pillar IV (human rights).[252] The SG's 2020 and 2021 reports on GCTS implementation are deeply preoccupied with technical and capacity building initiatives on issues such as law enforcement, financial controls and counter narratives.[253] Activities on human rights reported under Pillar IV focus more on recognising the rights of people impacted by of terrorism, but little on how the rights of wider populations are being upheld in the face of widespread abusive counter-terrorism measures.[254]

According to one UN official, UNOCT's "global human rights programming lacks a clear vision, indicators – everything you expect to see in a project proposal".[255] According to another, "it's very easy to make nice statements expressing our commitment to human rights and other principles, but we've fallen far short of having the impact the UN might have in that area".[256]

The 2020 and 2021 reports on GCTS implementation likewise say very little about substantive UN engagement to tackle conditions conducive to terrorism through conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution or peacebuilding efforts, such as might address the drivers of conflict and violence, nor do they offer any discussion of the impacts of any such work.[257]

So, the UN's counter-terrorism efforts remain defined and monitored as separate in practice from the UN system's advancement of these known effective remedies.[258]

In 2020, KPMG's evaluation of UNCCT found that 'human rights and gender equality were not effectively mainstreamed during the [UNCCT] 5-Year Programme…Work also remains to build an institutional culture that supports the mainstreaming of gender equality and human rights [within UNOCT]'.[259] Then, in December 2021, an independent UN report synthesising evaluations of programming under the GCTS called for 'special attention to human rights issues'.[260] The report made detailed criticisms of the failure to integrate human rights into UN counter-terrorism programmes,[261] finding 'limited evidence of an increase in respect for human rights and rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism'.[262]

3. Undermining and misappropriating the UN's core values in the service of repression

Many experts, CSOs, member state representatives and officials have expressed concerns over the domination of the UN counter-terror architecture by member states with a 'history of violating fundamental freedoms in the fight to counter terrorism and using counter-terrorism measures to legitimate a crackdown on dissidents'.[263] Thus 'the same small group of countries…have been able to select candidates for key leadership positions, hold the chairmanship of counter-terrorism related committees, and ultimately exert control over the structure and its activities'.[264] Such states have been emboldened and empowered by the rapid expansion of a UN counter-terrorism architecture that reinforces strong state security capacities and neglects due emphasis on the protection and promotion of human rights. As such, the direction of the UN's counter-terrorism architecture provides a dangerous vector for the rapid, ongoing global erosion of peace, human rights, democracy and civic space.[265]

Such challenges are mirrored on the ground, with UN peace operations, counter-terrorism and countering/ preventing violent extremism (C/PVE) programmes at times reinforcing the agenda of abusive member states.[266] As Saferworld has observed, '"[b]lue-washing" abuse, corruption, exclusion and discrimination under the UN counter-terrorism or C/PVE brand…risks damaging the UN's reputation and credibility, and exposing it to a future backlash for aligning behind the agenda of authoritarian governments in the divided and repressive societies where terror attacks overwhelmingly occur.'[267]

4. Inclusion, empowerment and accountability deficits

In a context where many authoritarian states use counter-terrorism justifications to surveil, arbitrarily imprison, criminalise, torture and kill civil society advocates and human rights defenders, concerns remain significant over the risk of counter-terrorism and C/PVE agendas that 'instrumentalise and commodify' civil society.[268] In his 2020 report on GCTS implementation, the SG called for 'a more positive, inclusive and sustainable paradigm' to take forward the GCTS, 'whereby youth and communities are empowered and invested in as partners rather than targeted as risk groups'.[269] The 7th GCTS recognises the importance of 'support for and partnership with civil society actors committed to the principles and objectives of the [UN] Charter' and that 'civil society actors should be further enabled to contribute to the goals of the Strategy', in line with the UN Guidance Note on the Protection and Promotion of Civic Space.[270]

Despite this, there have long been concerns over the opaque and exclusionary character of the UN counter-terrorism architecture.[271] For one thing:

> 'Civil society – and in particular those who express concerns about the impacts of counter-terrorism efforts – remains at arm's length from strategy reviews and other UN counter-terrorism decision-making fora.'[272]

Moreover:

> 'The UN has not consistently stopped counter-terrorism or C/PVE programme support for governments responsible for…abuses…With the UN supporting governments in dozens of countries to develop and implement national action plans on PVE, which are being used to surveil and pacify "suspect" groups, there could be serious and negative long-term implications for the UN's standing.'[273]

UNOCT has made tentative steps towards a more inclusive approach to civil society engagement, including with the publication of its (abridged) civil society engagement strategy in May 2020, yet problems remain. One is that many CSOs and member states see the strategy as underwhelming.[274] It likewise 'remains unclear how civil society perspectives are reflected in the final engagement strategy'.[275]

Despite greater willingness to have civil society at the conference table, it is far from clear whether UNOCT merely sees civil society as a necessary junior service provider within state-centric security campaigns, rather than as an important partner in promoting and bargaining for the SG's more comprehensive vision for better governed, more just, accountable and peaceful societies.

The need to go further towards a constructive, socially supportive model for tackling security challenges was underscored in the UN's recent meta-synthesis of counter-terrorism programme evaluations. The report flags the weaknesses of approaches that are 'too strongly tied to states' interests',[276] notes a lack of evidence on impacts from the UN's training of 164,350 persons, and drily observes that 'the impact of training and capacity development in counterterrorism in general is not particularly evidenced in the research literature'.[277] It therefore calls for 'some self-examination by compact agencies as new projects and programmes are considered',[278] and highlights the need for more 'multi-dimensional' approaches that involve civil society organisations, advocacy, community service models in which beneficiaries and participants are co-creators, the integration of gender equality concerns, and support for women and young people.[279]

As a UN official candidly acknowledged:

> "Some things we've done have thrown fuel on the fire of terrorism. Securitising counterterrorism hasn't worked, and excluding civil society from responses has backfired. CSOs are uniquely equipped to reach people and promote solutions at community level. So we've left those areas vulnerable to exploitation for radicalisation. So that theory of change over last 20 years could be re-examined."[280]

The persistent failure to prioritise such programming models was underscored in a recent consultation of civil society in 43 countries, which found that:

> '[s]ignificant challenges remain for meaningfully and regularly engaging with CSOs, integrating a coordinated, one-UN approach, and mainstreaming human rights and gender within the UN counter-terrorism architecture and more broadly in national, regional and global security fora. Independent experts and CSOs have expressed concerns regarding the inadequate, ad hoc, and opaque nature of UN counter-terrorism entities' engagement with CSOs to date.'[281]

5. Gender tokenism

A major concern in this regard has been the tendency to 'undercut women's rights, activism and political participation',[282] with 'the Secretary-General himself…express[ing] concerns about instrumentalising women for counter-terrorism purposes'.[283] References to women,

girls and/or gender sensitivity have been integrated into C/PVE narratives, based on little or no gender analysis or focus on promoting gender equality or women's rights.

Gender has thus often been raised superficially, with security aims in mind, while crucial issues – such as how violent groups use gender norms and silence women, and the impacts of militarised counter-terrorism responses on women and girls – remain out of focus. As noted in a public statement by civil society produced as part of a 2020 global digital consultation on civil society perspectives on the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and counter-terrorism responses:

> 'Current approaches often do not allow for effective participation of civil society, and women in particular, although women represent a significant percentage of the victims of violent extremism – both direct and indirect. Young women in particular are insufficiently involved. As a result, issues such as women's rights, justice, education, employment, as well as the need to confront structural social injustices and discrimination – that should be at the core of any PVE or counterterrorism approach – are not included.'[284]

6. Incoherence

At the strategic level, it is a problem for the UN that the GCTS has through political 'horse-trading' become so unwieldy. Spanning just nine pages in its initial 2006 iteration,[285] by 2021 the 7th GCTS had grown to 27 pages. As one member state interviewee observed:

> "[the GCTS] has so much in it – you can go shopping in it and buy what you want. It is hard to understand – featuring caveats after caveats, ideas and counter-ideas. So it has become impossible to understand for people in capital who aren't in the negotiations."[286]

A further and fundamental obstacle to improving performance on the above areas of concern is that, while some agencies have strong standards, safeguards and accountability/reporting mechanisms, responsibility for ensuring coherence, coordination and risk management on counter-terrorism and PVE is diffuse, not only within the UN system in general but even within UNOCT.[287] As FIDH noted in 2017, '[a]ttempts to enhance coordination have not addressed the root causes of the issue and how various entities' mandates duplicate and overlap with one another.'[288] Since then, attempts to enhance coordination and internal information sharing have been stepped up, in particular via the Global Compact (which now has at least eight working groups). Nonetheless, coherence is a problem:

> 'the separate priorities and funding sources that are attached to counterterrorism and PVE projects[…] have siloed counterterrorism activities from broader conflict prevention efforts.'[289]

As UN officials interviewed observed, within working groups, members do not always have the skills to take responsibility for integrating core issues like gender equality and human rights into the initiatives in focus. Some drew attention to an uncomfortable and unbalanced dynamic: UNOCT's bloated budget gives it power to expand its footprint and decide where resources go, whereas in practice other UN agencies have the procedures, approaches and local footprint that is actually required for delivery on GCTS objectives.

Furthermore, there remains a clear risk of counter-terrorism entities and initiatives working at cross-purposes with RCs and country teams' analysis, plans and assistance frameworks. The Global Center reports that 'interlocutors[…] complained of setbacks when counterterrorism priorities and programs are "parachuted in" without adequate local and national consultations'.[290]

Clearly, UNOCT is working on transparency and coordination: extensive reporting and briefings illustrate UNOCT's efforts to boost transparency, and UNOCT acts as the secretariat for the Global Compact, currently 'the largest coordination framework across the [UN's] three pillars'.[291] However, those interviewed noted the opaque process by which UNOCT resources were allocated and programmes started,[292] while several others shared concerns about the lack of cooperative spirit that UNOCT exhibited.[293] Further sources noted the need for "serious attention [to] better rationalising the simultaneous existence of CTED and UNOCT", which "sometimes work well together – but at other times appear to be on parallel tracks".[294]

7. Weak oversight, performance and risk management

There are likewise fundamental problems in 'objectively assessing global progress on implementation of the Strategy'.[295] These include the lack of 'a formal assessment mandate and framework', significant 'reliance on voluntary contributions and "self-reporting"', and very patchy 'monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and staff resources to assess the effectiveness and impact' of activities.[296] Sixteen years since its first adoption, the SG's reports on progress in implementing the GCTS thus '[do] not qualify progress in detail or provide a global assessment of the extent of Strategy implementation and the positive and negative consequences of counterterrorism, CFT [Combating the Financing of Terrorism], and PVE efforts'.[297] Despite rhetoric regarding results orientation within the GCTS and the UN counter-terrorism system,[298] and some important recent initiatives to begin seeking independent feedback (see section 2), GCTS strategy reviews focus on long lists of activities and participant numbers, while neglecting to analyse and discuss outcomes and impact.[299]

Annex 2: Summary of current UN CT oversight, performance and risk management capacities, standards, procedures and initiatives

CAPACITIES
- UNOCT divisions, departments or units with a role in planning, standard setting, coordination, risk management and M&E: - Strategic Planning and Programme Support Section (responsible for budget proposals, risk assessments and M&E)   - Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination Branch (responsible for coordination and coherence in the counter-terrorism and PVE work of the UN system)   - Special Projects and Innovation Branch (responsible for coordinating special technical assistance programmes with the Global Compact, UNCCT and others)   - Project review board.   - Other staff and units with a role in integration of cross-cutting agendas, oversight and M&E: - UNOCT M&E personnel (at least one officer)   - UNOCT human rights/victims of terrorism and gender unit   - UNOCT proposed unit for CSO engagement   - The UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT, a part of UNOCT) has four staff covering human rights and victims of terrorism, 'although none is expressly tasked with focusing on the impacts of counterterrorism on human rights'[300]   - CTED has three human rights officers and a humanitarian law expert.[301]   - The Global Compact, which offers an overall mechanism for collaborative design, coordination and implementation of counter-terrorism programming across its 39 members and 6 observers, including its: - Working Group on Resource Mobilisation and M&E[302]   - Working Group on Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Preventing and Countering Terrorism   - Working Group on Human Rights and Victims of Terrorism.   - Oversight and integration roles of specific entities through: - the SG and his Executive Office, under whose purview UNOCT sits, and who prepares reports on GCTS implementation and other matters for the GA, with support from UNOCT   - OHCHR, which plays a critical role in 'promoting the protection of human rights while countering terrorism and mainstreaming human rights throughout all four pillars of the Strategy', producing 'numerous guidance documents', implementing 'capacity-building programmes for Member States on human rights aspects of countering terrorism' and taking lead responsibility for the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP)[303]   - UN Women, which plays a critical role within the Global Compact on gender integration   - the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (SR-HRCT), which includes a focus on gender integration   - UNCCT's advisory board of 21 member states, chaired by the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia, which oversees its budget, programmes, projects and proposals.[304]   - A coordination portal for sharing information, including CTED assessments across UN agencies.[305]
GUIDANCE, STANDARDS & RESULTS FRAMEWORKS
- Guidance and safeguards, such as: - the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) on security cooperation   - UNDP's Guidance Note on Risk Management for PVE Programmes and Toolkit for the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of PVE Programmes[306]   - the United Nations Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space.[307]   - The theory of change and results framework being developed for all UN counter-terrorism programmes by the Global Compact Working Group on Resource Mobilisation and M&E.[308]   - UNOCT's Monitoring & Evaluation Framework   - Counter-Terrorism Centre's (UNCCT) 'results-based Programme Results Framework'.   - Norms and standards for evaluation as set out in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards.

- UN Women's 'Gender marker guidance note', which 'sets out common principles and standards for gender equality marker systems that track and report on allocations and expenditures for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment'.[309]
- The 'Common Understanding on a Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation' (HRBA),[310] which the UN Sustainable Development Group has adopted to ensure all programmes advance human rights, as laid down in:
  - the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other instruments of international human rights.
- International humanitarian and refugee law.
- HRBA is one of six Guiding Principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, designed to advance achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

PROCEDURES

- CTED assessments, which look externally at member states' implementation of Security Council resolutions, but internally are intended to play the role of shaping UN counter-terrorism priorities taken forward by UNOCT and Global Compact entities. (The assessments are confidential and often partly-redacted when shared internally.)
- A 'new collaborative way of working' between UNOCT and CTED.[311]
- GCTS review processes and the SG's reports on GCTS implementation.
- Risk assessments by UNOCT's Strategic Planning and Programme Support Section.
- Steps towards increasing CSO engagement, for example, in CTED visits, UNOCT conferences (even if the extent to which CSO input into theories of change, programme design, M&E frameworks and processes remains limited).
- Regular UNOCT reporting, including quarterly to member states and annually on UNCCT activities.[312]

AD HOC INITIATIVES

- Assessments/evaluations and follow-up processes, such as:
  - the Office of Internal Oversight Services' (OIOS) 2018 audit of UNCCT[313]
  - Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler's (KPMG's) 2020 'Evaluation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre'[314]
  - UNODC's 2020 synthesis of evaluations of PVE and crime interventions[315]
  - the 2021 'Learn better, together' report, which synthesises evaluations of UN programming under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy[316]
  - UN Women's assessment of gender integration and digital consultation
  - Global Compact M&E working group's mapping of GCTS programming and its responsiveness to CTED recommendations[317]
  - SR-HRCT reports on thematic issues, including a planned Special Rapporteur report on the impact of counter-terrorism at the national level.
- OHCHR's project on integrating human rights into country practice.
- Efforts to ensure coordination between Resident Coordinators and UNOCT, despite the lack of a formal line of coordination and accountability – for example, including guidance on how the relationship should work in Central Asia.
- Programme or project evaluations, for example, commissioned by UNCCT on its programmes.

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Function before form: optimising the UN's counter-terrorism architecture

[1] UN GA (2021c), 'The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: seventh review' (hereafter '7th GCTS'), A/RES/75/291, New York: UN GA, June.

[2] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[3] The GCTS' four pillars are:

I.   addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism

II. measures to prevent and combat terrorism

III. measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the UN system in that regard

IV. measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism

See UN GA (2021c), '7th GCTS', op cit.

[4] UNOCT's mandate, as set out in GA resolution 71/291 in line with SG report A/71/858, is:

(a) to provide leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General from across the United Nations system

(b) to enhance coordination and coherence across the 38 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force [Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact] entities to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

(c) to strengthen the delivery of United Nations counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance to member states

(d) to improve visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for United Nations counterterrorism efforts

(e) to ensure that due priority is given to counter-terrorism across the United Nations system and that the important work on preventing violent extremism is firmly rooted in the Strategy. See: UN GA (2017), 'Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 15 June 2017: Strengthening the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', A/RES/71/291, New York: UN GA, 19 June.

[5] Institute for Economics & Peace (2022), 'Global terrorism index 2022', p 2.

[6] 'Change management' can be defined as a systematic approach to dealing with the transition or transformation of an organisation's goals, approaches, allocation of resources, capacities, processes and effectiveness. The purpose of change management can be both to implement strategies for change and assisting people to adapt to change. As noted in the UN Joint Inspection Unit's (UNJIU) 'Review of change management in United Nations system organization' (UNJIU, 2019), p 3: 'Change management, as a term, has increasingly been referenced in United Nations system organizational reform documents'. Change management in the UN counter-terrorism architecture and UNOCT is specifically referred to as a success by the SG in the report on how to monitor the GCTS. See UN GA (2019), 'Options on ways to assess the impact and progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary-General', A/73/866, New York: UN GA, 8 May.

[7] Global Center on Cooperative Security (2020), 'Blue Sky V: An Independent Analysis of UN Counterterrorism Efforts' (New York: Global Center), p 52. Most member states and UN officials interviewed expressed an overall concern about the growing size and strengthening of the UN counter-terrorism architecture.

[8] International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) (2017), 'The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Complex: Bureaucracy, Political Influence and Civil Liberties' (Paris: FIDH), p 52.

[9] UN GA (2019), 'Options on ways to assess the impact and progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary-General', A/73/866, New York: UN GA, 8 May, para 54.

[10] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 56.

[11] UN GA (2021a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January, paras 65–66, offers examples of programmes requiring such controls: '65. UNODC delivered several training sessions on its Counter-terrorism Learning Platform, benefiting over 1,000 criminal justice and law enforcement officials since the start of the pandemic. It implemented a range of activities focused, for instance, on addressing foreign terrorist fighters and the linkages between terrorism and organized crime. It also increased targeted capacity-building support for Member States, including in the Sahel and Mozambique. 66. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia continued to implement the third phase of the joint plan of action project to promote the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, while the Centre continued to support the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior in developing an Arab security vision based on the Strategy. The Centre worked on the development of a virtual expert network and a handbook to promote South-South cooperation in preventing and countering terrorism. UNDP, UNODC and the Centre continued to jointly implement two projects with the European Union, one on strengthening resilience to violent extremism in Asia and one on preventing violent extremism by promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in South-east Asia. The Office of Counter-Terrorism launched a counter-terrorism partnership project between the United Nations and the European Union to support the Sudan and led the development of an "all-of-United Nations" counter-terrorism assistance package for consideration by Mozambique.'

[12] See, for example, Attree L, Street J (2022), 'No shortcuts to security: lessons from responses to armed conflicts involving proscribed groups' (London: Saferworld).

13 See Annex 2 for more information on each of these.

[14] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 31.

[15] UN GA (2021c), 'The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: seventh review' (hereafter '7th GCTS'), A/RES/75/291, New York: UN GA, June, paras 83, 92.

[16] Ibid, para 93.

[17] UN GA (2019), 'Options on ways to assess the impact and progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary-General', A/73/866, New York: UN GA, 8 May, para 54.

[18] Ibid, para 54.

[19] Ibid, para 55.

[20] Ibid, para 61.

[21] Ibid, para 66.

[22] Ibid, para 68.

[23] UN GA (2021c), 'The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: seventh review' (hereafter '7th GCTS'), A/RES/75/291, New York: UN GA, June, p 3.

[24] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 72.

[25] See Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 41.

[26] As discussed in Saferworld (2021), 'The rise of counter-terrorism at the United Nations' (London: Saferworld).

[27] Interviews with member states and UN officials, April–May 2022.

[28] Saferworld, op cit. Global Center further elaborates on this point as follows: 'Ensure that all counterterrorism and PVE programming from inception to staffing, delivery, monitoring, and review are undertaken in compliance with international human rights standards. It also would apply key programming principles such as do no harm, equity, and inclusion. It could not cover in detail all the human rights components alone, and procedures must be in place to hold all UN staff accountable to the HRDDP standards' (Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 33).

[29] Another senior official agreed that, "HRDDP isn't being applied uniformly by all entities." Interviews with UN officials, April–May 2022.

[30] Summarised, for example, at Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 23.

[31] For example, there is very little focus on this in UN GA (2021a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January.

[32] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[33] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022. A UN official further underlined this same point, pointing back to the lack of clarity in the GCTS: "A key challenge is with the interpretation of prevention itself[…]. Because we are not clear on definitions we are not clear on our objectives[…] the investment is nearly all into security structures and very little into root causes.[…] A paradigm shift of applying peacebuilding tools is the only way. We're ignoring this and programming around the problem."

[34] Altiok A, Street J (2020), 'A fourth pillar for the United Nations? The rise of counter-terrorism' (London: Saferworld); and Attree L, Street J, Venchiarutti L (2018), 'UN Peace Operations in complex environments' (London: Saferworld) articulate the importance of strengthening the peacemaking role of the UN as a vital antidote to terror threats. Bonnefont A, Sarfati A, Ipe J (2021), 'Continuity Amid Change: The 2021 Mandate Renewal of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate' (New York: Global Center/IPI, November), p 4, makes a similar observation on the need to integrate assessment of conflict dynamics into CTED assessment methodologies.

[35] See, for example, Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, pp 26–7, which highlights deficits in CSO access and meaningful consultation feeding into reform priorities on the basis of the regional conferences and high-level consultations conducted between the 6th and 7th GCTS reviews, as well as broader barriers for CSOs to access New York-based debates.

[36] See Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 24.

[37] For example, 'UNDP has nurtured a vast network of civil society entities across its programming, including in PVE activities. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) regularly communicates with a network of more than 1,000 civil society organizations and issues statements condemning violations against civil society. CTED's Global Research Network, now five years old, hosts regular meetings and draws on evidence-based research from nongovernmental sources to integrate into its activities and analytical products. UN Women activated its own networks by leading a global consultation process with civil society on the Strategy review and organized a dedicated side event during the 2019 African regional high-level conference on counterterrorism in Kenya.[…] Several Global Compact members already have mechanisms for engaging civil society, including UN Women and OHCHR, which can serve as models for the UNOCT and other Global Compact members. UN leadership should advocate, internally and externally, for the integration of civil society organisations in a positive manner and allocate adequate resources and technical capacities for their engagement and in support of their activities.' Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, pp 25, 40.

[38] [No author] (2022), 'Civil Society Workshop Outcome Document', Malaga, 9 May, (www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/CIVIL-SOCIETY-OUTCOME-DOCUMENT-MALAGA-2022-1-1.pdf), p 7.

[39] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 27; see also p 40.

[40] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[41] See Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 41.

[42] Interviews with an independent expert and a member state, April–May 2022.

[43] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 33.

[44] L Attree, J Street (2022), op cit, pp 45–54, 59.

[45] UN Women (2012), 'Gender marker guidance note', United Nations Development Group (www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2012/1/gender-marker-guidance-note)

[46] [No author] (2022), op cit, p10.

[47] Saferworld, op cit.

[48] According to one UN official: "It is a huge problem and we don't know how to go about it[…] the UN as a whole should be concerned about lack of independent oversight and M&E that is thorough and robust." (Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022)

[49] As one member state representative put it, "It is problematic that UNOCT is preparing its own reports on its role on all these points. It is assessing its own work and trying to get own interests in." (Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.). According to another, the 7th GCTS "empowered the UNOCT to monitor itself." (Interview with a member state, April–May 2022).

[50] Its mandate under GA resolution 71/291 tasks it with, inter alia 'improv[ing] visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for United Nations counter-terrorism efforts' and 'ensur[ing] that due priority is given to counter-terrorism throughout the United Nations system'.

[51] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[52] See FIDH, op cit, 39.

[53] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[54] Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) (2018), 'Audit of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre', Report 2018/121, OIOS, 6 December, p 5.

[55] See FIDH, op cit, 175.

[56] KPMG (2020), 'Evaluation of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre' (final report), Norway: KPMG.

[57] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[58] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[59] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[60] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022. Since HRDDP was designed to support UN engagement with security forces and so could require updating to cover other UN counter-terrorism programming that is not implemented in partnership with the security sector.

[61] OIOS, op cit.

[62] KPMG, op cit.

[63] UNODC (no date), 'Meta-Synthesis – Prevention of Crime and Violent Extremism: knowledge brief', Vienna: UNODC.

[64] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December (https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/meta-synthesis_united_nations_global_counter_terrorism_strategy.pdf)

[65] Interview with an independent expert, April–May 2022.

[66] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[67] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[68] For example, a central idea underpinning its capacity development work appear to be that states' counter-terrorism approaches are ineffective because of weak capacity and unawareness of best practices, rather than the absence of political will (which can only be sustainably improved through state–society bargaining processes).

[69] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 31.

[70] Interviews with UN officials, April–May 2022.

[71] See also FIDH, op cit, pp 9, 137–8, which highlights also that, 'each of the six states who founded the SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organization] and those that are observer and dialogue partners show a continued egregious human rights records' and that 'FIDH has documented extensive human rights abuses committed within the SCO framework of "mutual recognition"'.

[72] UN (2021b), 'Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General', New York: UN, p 7.

[73] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[74] A member state interviewee, for example, noted that, "Quarterly and bi-monthly briefings by UNOCT are only about how many activities they did and never about results." (Interview with a member state, April–May 2022).

[75] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[76] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[77] In another interview, a member state observed that, "on CT there is an overflow of information but it is not really possible to figure out what is really being done on the ground". Still another stated that the SG should be demanding results-based reporting. A UN official noted that, "the emphasis has been on activities that have taken place, but no clear evidence has been delivered on the impact". Another noted a focus on large conferences and 'grin-and-grab' photo opportunities with major donors, and while there are huge needs in relation to gender, human rights, prevention and development in line with the GCTS, "they've not been moving forward on it.[…] They don't know how to do it." For another senior official: "They have these huge 5 star events with hundreds of people flown in – working level, ministers, thousands of tweets, region gets lot of buzz on CT. You may ask: 'to what end, with what impact?' I often have officials saying 'what is the point, what do we get out of it? I've had a lot of cake and coffee but those events don't add value'." (Interviews with member states and UN officials, April–May 2022).

[78] Interview with an independent expert, April–May 2022.

[79] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[80] UN GA (2021b), 'Proposed programme budget for 2022, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/76/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 139. This appears to be a reference to KPMG, op cit, p 12, which states that, 'The Under-Secretary-General should develop with his leadership team a plan to develop a "results culture" within UNCCT/UNOCT and monitor its implementation progress.'

[81] A priority flagged in Bonnefont, Sarfati, Ipe, op cit, p 4, for example.

[82] As in the mapping exercise conducted by the Global Compact's M&E working group; see above and UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, paras 54–55.

[83] A need backed by several interviews with member states and UN officials, April–May 2022.

[84] Outcomes are real-world changes in the objective situation, policies, laws and capacities to solve the problem, and public perceptions of progress achieved as a result of counter-terrorism activities. For a comprehensive overview of how to monitor performance in the prevention of violence and its causes, including on the crucial question of balancing types of indicators, the wide variety of credible sources available, and the vital importance of monitoring public perceptions of progress, see: Attree L (2013), 'Addressing conflict and violence from 2015: a vision of goals, targets and indicators', Saferworld (www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/730-a-vision-of-goals-targets-and-indicators)

[85] See also: UN GA (2019), op cit, which describes a results framework and states that it 'should include a human rights-based approach' (para 55) and notes that 'All Global Compact entities should share information on how they have integrated human rights and gender considerations into all their capacity-building projects and other activities' (para 68); and Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 41.

[86] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[87] UN GA (2021b), 'Proposed programme budget for 2022, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/76/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 138.

[88] See UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, pp ix, 5–8, 77ff. The draft results framework elaborates 3 strategic objectives and a total of 18 outcomes contributing to them, together with suggested indicators, data sources and data collection methods.

[89] See: Attree (2013), op cit.

[90] See SDG16 Hub (n.d.), 'SDG 16 Indicators', (https://www.sdg16hub.org/landing-page/sdg-16-indicators).

[91] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, p 33.

[92] For an overview including 160+ examples of relevant indicators, see Attree (2013), op cit.

[93] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, p 20.

[94] See also FIDH's warnings about the danger of authoritarian collaborations justified as counter-terrorism in International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) (2017), 'The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Complex: Bureaucracy, Political Influence and Civil Liberties' (Paris: FIDH).

[95] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, pp 24–26.

[96] Ibid, p xii.

[97] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022: "It is hard for states to align their approach with a constantly changing approach." This was also echoed in other interviews with member states and UN officials, April–May 2022.

[98] "It is not a rational discussion – more 'if you want this, then you must delete that'. It is not a process that could give a good result." (Interview with a member state, April–May 2022).

[99] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, pp 32–33.

[100] 'For instance, the Peacebuilding Strategy Review offers a model for an inclusive, deliberate review that includes an independent assessment by eminent persons and regional and thematic consultations with member states, UN entities, and civil society. The findings of these informal engagements, which are principally led by a core group of UN entities, are then compiled and submitted to the Secretary-General for their report on peace-building and sustaining peace.' Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 36.

[101] FIDH, op cit, p 51.

[102] See Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 32.
[103] Rogers C, Ruteere M (2021), 'Why UN Counterterrorism Needs Human Rights Oversight Now', JustSecurity, 22 June.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[106] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[107] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[108] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 31.
[109] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[110] See, for example, Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 32, and its argument that, 'Conducting human rights assessments will require dedicated and experienced personnel, beyond project managers, to deliver on this promise in a meaningful way and will be necessary not only at the project proposal review phases but across the entire project life cycle.'
[111] As one UN official observed, it may be necessary to "stop UNOCT obstructing it" (Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022).
[112] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 32. The importance of supporting the UN Special Rapporteur with adequate resources, and not overburdening the mandate with additional routine monitoring responsibilities, was also underlined in multiple interviews with member states, April–May 2022.
[113] Interviews with UN officials, April–May 2022.
[114] Interviews with an independent expert and a UN official, April–May 2022.
[115] Saferworld (2021), op cit.
[116] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022. In this vein, the Global Center suggests: 'All strategies and programs should include targets and indicators that focus on measuring impact, reductions in terrorism, and improvements in human security. These should be informed by UN country teams, CTED recommendations, and field-based research and input and need to be in close alignment with the Secretary-General's general reform efforts, call to action, and prevention focus. Chairs of other Global Compact working groups need to actively consult the Chairs of the victims and human rights and the resource mobilization, monitoring, and evaluation working groups to ensure that the promotion and protection of human rights are properly mainstreamed [and] the assessment of this effort is standardized.' (Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 40.)
[117] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[118] OIOS, op cit, pp 5, 7.
[119] KPMG, op cit, p 8.
[120] UNODC (n.d.), 'Meta-Synthesis – Prevention of Crime and Violent Extremism: knowledge brief', Vienna: UNODC, p 1.
[121] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, p ix.
[122] Ibid, p x.
[123] Ibid, p x.
[124] Ibid, p x. See also p 49: 'The meta-synthesis established preliminary evidence to suggest the need for harmonizing the framework and strengthening evaluation capacity. Not only do half of the reviewed reports mention this need, as validated in interviews, the data and methodologies used in evaluation products further show the need to focus on developing this capacity among programme staff and evaluators engaged by the Compact entities. Such an assessment should pay close attention to whether the entities possess capacity to assess impact on human rights and rule of law of CT actions by UN entities and their partners.'
[125] Ibid, pp xii. In relation to uneven capacities and results orientation across Compact entities, it is notable that more than half of the 118 evaluations reviewed were provided by UNDP, 14 by UNODC, with just 4 of the total furnished by UNOCT (p 4).
[126] Ibid, p 49.
[127] Ibid, pp xii.
[128] Chigas D, Church M, Corlazzoli V (2014), 'Evaluating Impacts of Peacebuilding Interventions: Approaches and Methods, Challenges and Considerations' (London/Boston: CDA/Saferworld).
[129] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, p 93.
[130] UN (2021b), 'Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General', New York: UN, p 7.
[131] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, p 93.
[132] UN GA (2019), op cit, para 64.
[133] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[134] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[135] Interviews with member states and UN officials, April–May 2022. One official argued that, "[OCT] needs to be coordinating better with what is being agreed in the UN framework negotiated with the govt. The risks are really serious here and there's a lot of operational questions and risk of wasted resources."
[136] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022. According to another UN official, "When you talk about this effectiveness and alignment, they [OCT officials] go blank and don't understand why this is important. But it's very important for proper collaboration with [my agency].[…] they believe they can do work in country in parallel to the UNCT coop framework[… and remain] out of the M&E." (Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022).
[137] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.
[138] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[139] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[140] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[141] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022. Compare also the suggestion in Saferworld (2021), op cit, to: 'Task UN resident coordinators with authorising and overseeing all in-country counter-terrorism- and P/CVE-related projects to ensure conflict-sensitive and "do no harm" programming is compatible with other UN in-country and regional support.'
[142] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.
[143] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.
[144] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.
[145] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, paras 61-62.
[146] UN GA (2021b), 'Proposed programme budget for 2022, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/76/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, pp 148–9.
[147] UN GA (2022), 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 128.

[148] UN GA (2021b), 'Proposed programme budget for 2022, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/76/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 150.

[149] UN GA (2022), 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, pp 127–128.

[150] On the rushed process to prepare and adopt its mandate with limited scrutiny and debate, see BA39. BA36 also observes that the officials who originally conceptualised UNOCT were largely in posts dependent on Saudi Arabian extrabudgetary funding contributions.

[151] Altiok, Street, op cit, p 2.

[152] UN GA (2021b), 'Proposed programme budget for 2022, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/76/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 149.

[153] Ibid, p 150.

[154] See, for example, Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 12. Also noted in an interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[155] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 12.

[156] UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) (no date a), '2019–2020 UNOCT Consolidated Multi-Year Appeal', New York: UNOCT, p 7.

[157] Altiok, Street, op cit, p 11: 'Saudi Arabia has[…] resisted efforts to diversify the sources of funds that bankroll UNCCT, reportedly to safeguard its status as lead donor and thus its leverage over UN leadership. Other attempts to create more rigorous guidelines for how the funds are spent, similar to the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) or other UN mechanisms, have been resisted by the long-time Chair of the UN Trust Fund, Saudi Ambassador Abdallah Yahya Al-Mouallimi.'

[158] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 56.

[159] Based on author's statistical analysis of: United Nations (UN) (n.d.), '2021–2022 United Nations Multi-Year Appeal for Counter-Terrorism', project summaries provided to author by UNOCT; further non-downloadable information on UN 2021–22 consolidated appeal via a portal (www.un.org/counterterrorism/MYA-2021-2022); UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (no date), '2021–2022 United Nations Multi-Year Appeal for Counter-Terrorism', promotional flyer provided to author by UNOCT.

[160] UN GA, 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), (New York: UN GA, 3 May 2022), p 129.

[161] UN GA, 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), (New York: UN GA, 3 May 2022), pp 126, 130.

[162] Interview with a UNOCT official, April-May 2022.

[163] Interview with a UNOCT official, April-May 2022.

[164] UN GA (2022), 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 128.

[165] Ibid, p 131.

[166] UN GA (2017), 'Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 15 June 2017: Strengthening the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', A/RES/71/291, New York: UN GA, 19 June, in line with SG report A/71/858.

[167] Interview with a former member state official, April–May 2022.

[168] UN GA (2022), 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 129.

[169] Ibid, pp 129–130.

[170] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[171] Interviews with a UNOCT official and a UN official, April–May 2022.

[172] UN GA (2022), 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 130.

[173] Ibid, p 130.

[174] Ibid, p 130.

[175] Ibid, p 130.

[176] Ibid, p 137.

[177] Interview with a UNOCT official, April–May 2022.

[178] Interview with a UNOCT official, April–May 2022.

[179] Regarding the functions of the 25 proposed additional regular budget posts, in the accompanying organigrams for 2022 and 2023: 1 post is removed from the CTC; 5 are allocated to the UNOCT's proposed Human Rights and Gender Section; 4 to the Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination Branch; 4 to the Strategic Planning and Programme Support Section; and 1 to the Special Projects and Innovation Branch. Almost half – 12 posts – are allocated to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General. See UN GA (2022), 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, pp 138–139.

[180] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[181] KPMG, op cit, p 10.

[182] Specifically, at present the prospect of an end to Qatar's funding is underpinning the push for UNOCT to expand its regular budget (Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022).

[183] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 60; interview with a UNOCT official, April–May 2022, who noted that many member states have since spoken in support of this view.

[184] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p vii.

[185] Ibid, p vii.

[186] Interviews with a member state and a UN official, April–May 2022.

[187] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[188] Echoed in an interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[189] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p vii. A concern also raised in an interview with a Member State, who criticised the fact that UNOCT's newly opened Human Rights and Gender Section had no budget to conduct activities unless donors provided voluntary contributions.

[190] Interview with a UNOCT official, April–May 2022.

[191] As FIDH has noted: 'Saudi Arabia has used the threat of withdrawing funds from critical UN programs to compel the UN Secretary-General to remove the coalition from his "List of Shame" for killing and maiming children and attacking schools and hospitals in Yemen.' (FIDH, op cit, p 67).

[192] Altiok, Street, op cit, p 4.

[193] Interviews with member states, April–May 2022.

[194] According to the Global Terrorism Index (Institute for Economics & Peace (2022), 'Global Terrorism Index 2022', IEP, p 4), deaths from terrorism fell from 7,228 in 2020 to 7,142 in 2021. According to Uppsala, conflicts accounted for more than 80,000 deaths in 2020. (UCDP (n.d.), 'Fatalities by type of violence (excluding Rwanda, 1994), 1989–2020' (https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/charts/)).

[195] See UN GA (2022), 'Proposed programme budget for 2023, Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs, Programme 2, Political affairs', A/77/6 (Sect. 3), New York: UN GA, 3 May, p 55 for DPPA and PBSO staffing levels.

[196] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[197] UN GA (2021c), '7th GCTS', op cit, para 98. See also UN GA (2021a) 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January, para 33: 'An urgent focus is therefore needed, supported by renewed political commitment and adequate resources, to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law in the implementation of all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Human rights should inform a nuanced, context-specific analysis of the conditions conducive to terrorism and guide the development, implementation, oversight, monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive policies and measures to prevent and counter terrorism and the underlying spread of violent extremism.'

[198] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, paras 37, 54, 71, 81.

[199] FIDH, op cit, p 79.

[200] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 29.

[201] UN GA (2021a) 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January, para 34.

[202] UNOCT (no date a), '2019–2020 UNOCT Consolidated Multi-Year Appeal', New York: UNOCT, p 3.

[203] Ibid, p 5.

[204] According to Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 14, 'A clear strategic direction or prioritization of resource mobilization efforts is difficult to distill from the appeal, which lists a disparate set of projects focused on topics ranging from youth empowerment to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense.'

[205] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[206] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[207] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[208] See UNOCT (no date a), '2019–2020 UNOCT Consolidated Multi-Year Appeal', New York: UNOCT, pp 33–35.

[209] For example: (1) the project on Ethiopia responds to 'the need for intensified interventions to counter the narratives of extremists as well as empowering both state institutions and local communities to de-radicalize the youth who are innocent victims of the radical ideologues'. The country must thus: 'build resilience against the potential overflow of violent extremist ideologies from Al Shabab.[…] The Project will actively seek to engage the youth and women in the debates, but also in activities that would keep them busy, and minimizing the chances of them being the subject of violent narratives.' What is presented is based on wholly reductive, depoliticised analysis of what drives violence within Ethiopia, which omits the role of oppressive governance and negates the important role of societal empowerment in promoting change (see GA30); (2) the project focused on Turkmenistan has the objective: 'to prevent radicalization among youth in Turkmenistan by mobilizing their energy, open-mindedness and dynamism as a potential positive force of countering terrorist and violent extremist influences and narratives'. This focus on pacifying the country's youth is wholly inappropriate for the UN in a country which Human Rights Watch describes as follows: 'Turkmenistan remains an extremely repressive country. The government severely restricts all fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedoms of association, expression, and religion.' (See Human Rights Watch (n.d.), 'Turkmenistan' (https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/turkmenistan)).

[210] See Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 14: this dual role 'left other entities of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact feeling that the UNOCT both sets the rules of the game and is an active player', leading to complaints of an insufficiently consultative approach to the consolidated appeal. Another interview with a UN official likewise pointed to the problems with UNOCT having been "initially envisaged to play a coordinating role" transforming "from a coordinating body to a competitor over these funds" (Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.). This was echoed in an interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[211] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 19.

[212] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022. As the official went on to argue, the UN should be investing more via agencies that can "use knowledge of communities to build bottom up peace structures", but collaboration with such entities is stymied: "There's huge potential for collaboration, but little trust, because of the huge divergence in approach and little coming together over what works."

[213] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[214] UN GA (2021a) 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January, para 78.

[215] Interview with a UNOCT official, April–May 2022.

[216] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[217] Interview with an independent expert, April–May 2022.

[218] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[219] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[220] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[221] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022. Echoed in an interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[222] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022. This was a view echoed in an interview with an independent expert, April–May 2022, who argued regarding UNOCT that: "there has been that desire to control power and not give the space to other UN entities to take forward programming as they have so much money from MS [member states]. This gives them another reason to bring funds through UNOCT and makes it easier for them not to address deficits in coordination."

[223] See FIDH, op cit, p 9: 'the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)[…] seeks to battle the Three evils of "terrorism, separatism, and extremism." FIDH has extensively documented human rights abuses committed in the SCO framework since 2009, which the UN's increasing regional cooperation effectively endorses. The UN should re-evaluate its modes of regional cooperation, not only with the SCO, but with other institutions as well, in order to promote human rights compliant counter-terrorism activities.' The problematic approach of SCO to counter-terrorism is explored in depth in ibid, pp 135–145.

[224] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[225] See, for example, Guiryanan O, Montanaro L, Räty T (2021), 'European security assistance: the search for stability in the Sahel' (London: Saferworld) (https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1368-european-security-assistance-the-search-for-stability-in-the-sahel); and Attree, Street, op cit, pp 29–31.

[226] As noted in UN GA (2021a) 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January, paras 65–66: 'The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia continued to implement the third phase of the joint plan of action project to promote the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, while the Centre continued to support the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior in developing an Arab security vision based on the Strategy. […] UNDP, UNODC and the Centre continued to jointly implement two projects[…] on strengthening resilience to violent extremism in Asia[…]. The Office of Counter-Terrorism launched a counter-terrorism partnership project between the United Nations and the European Union to support the Sudan and led the development of an "all-of-United Nations" counter-terrorism assistance package for consideration by Mozambique.'

[227] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[228] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[229] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[230] Interviews with member states and UN officials, April–May 2022.

[231] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[232] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[233] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[234] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[235] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[236] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022. This was echoed in an interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[237] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[238] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[239] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022, echoed in an interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[240] Interview with an independent expert, April–May 2022.

[241] Four interviews with member states, April–May 2022, echoed the point on standards being essential – though they were prepared to consider the budget at the same time.

[242] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[243] Interview with a UNOCT official, April-May 2022. Another official agreed that many donors would not be open to this, unless there were overall rules or guidelines on this for donor support to UN entities. (Interview with a UN official, April-May 2022).

[244] Interviews with member states and UN officials, April–May 2022.

[245] See also Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, pp 14, 40.

[246] UN (2020), 'United Nations Guidance Note: Protection and Promotion of Civic Space', New York: UN, September (www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN_Guidance_Note.pdf)

[247] UN GA (2015), 'Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary-General', A/70/674, New York: UN GA, 24 December (www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674), p 2.

[248] Ibid, p 2.

[249] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 79.

[250] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[251] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, paras 28, 31.

[252] Ibid, para 56. The 2019–20 UN consolidated appeal for counter-terrorism requested US$193,784,888 in funding for 60 projects and the Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) plan from 10 UN entities. Just 7 out of 60 fell under Pillar IV (UNOCT (no date a), '2019–2020 UNOCT Consolidated Multi-Year Appeal', New York: UNOCT, p 3).

[253] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February; UN GA (2021a) 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January.

[254] For example, UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 5–6, includes no progress at all on Pillar IV, save for the implementation of work on the human rights of victims of/people impacted by terrorism. This is a shocking level of neglect given the level of counter-terrorism related rights violations and the long-standing calls for balanced implementation of the GCTS.

[255] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[256] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[257] See UN GA (2021a) 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January.

[258] See also Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 29: 'Member states, independent experts, and civil society have long observed that Pillar IV remains underimplemented by pointing to the limited attention, programming, and investment under this pillar. Ensuring that human rights principles inform Strategy implementation, including by adopting rights-based and non-discriminatory approaches in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs and by creating avenues for civil society participation, requires more than incremental, project-based, or piecemeal approaches. It calls for structural reforms, strong leadership, and accountability to support a more fundamental shift in the culture.'

[259] KPMG, op cit, p 9.

[260] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, pp xiii, 50.

[261] Ibid, pp 31–32: 'Another UNODC evaluation pointed out a lack of adequate attention to a human rights approach in some areas of its implementation. The programme reportedly did not promote coordination and knowledge sharing with scholars, academia, or CSOs with an interest in exploring the substantive links between money laundering and gender and human rights issues. Even those of its components that encouraged the creation of networks, they did not include efforts to partner with organizations promoting human rights departments, specialized UN agencies or programmes such as UN Women. Likewise, the evaluation of UNCCT emphasized that its staff, with the exception of a Human Rights Officer, did not distinguish between programmes with a human rights (Pillar IV) component or emphasis and human rights mainstreaming, that is taking into account the existing status of human rights protections in national CT institutions and processes, and assessing the likely positive or negative effect that a particular programme may have. Although there were positive results in initiatives elevating the visibility of victims of terrorism, reportedly no reflection was given to a strong human rights mainstreaming process.' The UN went on to note that on states with rule of law-based criminal justice systems, 'For this outcome, there is scarce evidence

found in the documents reviewed.' (UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, p 34).

[262] Ibid, pp viii, xiii.

[263] FIDH, op cit, p 57.

[264] Ibid, pp 56–57.

[265] On this see Boese V et al. (2022), 'Autocratization Changing Nature? Democracy Report 2022', Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem).

[266] See: Saferworld (2021), op cit; Arugay A, Batac M, Street J (2021), 'An explosive cocktail – Counter-terrorism, militarisation and authoritarianism in the Philippines' (London, Saferworld); Attree, Street, Venchiarutti, op cit.

[267] Saferworld (2021), op cit.

[268] Ibid.

[269] UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 28.

[270] UN GA (2021c), '7th GCTS', op cit, p 4. Refers to UN (2020), 'United Nations Guidance Note: Protection and Promotion of Civic Space', New York: UN, September (www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN_Guidance_Note.pdf)

[271] See, for example, FIDH, op cit, pp 6–7 on opacity, and Saferworld (2021), op cit.

[272] Saferworld (2021), op cit.

[273] Ibid.

[274] Interviews with member states, April–May 2022.

[275] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 25.

[276] UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, p 24.

[277] Ibid, p 10.

[278] Ibid, p 24.

[279] Ibid, pp x–xi.

[280] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[281] 'Civil Society Workshop Outcome Document', Malaga, Spain, May 2022, p 7. Compare Bonnefont A (2021), 'Engagement With Civil Society: The Missing Piece in UN Counterterrorism Efforts', IPI Global Observatory, 23 June, which notes: 'There remains a concerning mismatch between, on the one hand, the UN's rhetorical acknowledgment of civil society's importance in shaping policy and programs, and, on the other, the growing difficulties civil society experience in operating at the national level and in participating and accessing the UN's counterterrorism architecture.'

[282] International Crisis Group (2020), 'A Course Correction for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda', ICG, 9 November (https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/b05-course-correction-women-peace-and-security-agenda), cited in Saferworld (2021), op cit.

[283] UN General Assembly (2021), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Report of the Secretary-General', 29 January (https://undocs.org/A/75/729)

[284] No author (2020), 'Public statement by civil society: voices and perspectives of civil society on the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and counter-terrorism', UN Women, UNOCT, UN Global Compact, produced as part of the Global digital consultation: Voices and perspectives of civil society on the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and counterterrorism responses, p 2.

[285] UN GA (2006), 'The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', A/RES/60/288, New York: UN GA, September.

[286] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[287] See, for example, Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 11, which notes that within UNOCT, 'The Strategic Planning and Programme Support Section[…] houses the secretariat of the Project Review Board and is responsible for strategic longer-term planning of UNOCT activities. It carries out a number of administrative functions, including the development of budget proposals, risk assessments, and coordinating the office's activities with the UN Department of Safety and Security', while at the same time 'promoting coordination and coherence in the counterterrorism and PVE work of the UN system' is supported by UNOCT's 'Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination Branch'. At the same time, UNOCT's 'Special Projects and Innovation Branch', 'is primarily responsible for leading the conceptualization, development, and implementation of special technical assistance programs that require increased coordination and Partnership with other UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, the UNCCT, the private sector, academia, and other public sector organizations.'

[288] FIDH, op cit, p 51.

[289] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 19.

[290] Ibid, p 20.

[291] UN, 'UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact', (undated) available at: https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/global-ct-compact. Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[292] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022.

[293] Interview with a member state, April–May 2022, as echoed in an interview with a UN official, April–May 2022.

[294] Interview with a UN official, April–May 2022, who pointed to "the well-known UN pitfall of territorial positioning and selective information-sharing".

[295] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 35.

[296] Ibid, p 35.

[297] Ibid, p 35.

[298] For example, results orientation is touted in UN GA (2021a) 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/75/279, New York: UN GA, 29 January, para 75.

[299] In particular, consideration of the outcomes of GCTS implementation efforts remains marginal in both of the SG's 2020 and 2021 reports on GCTS implementation. For example, see UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, paras 57, 59: 'Annex III of the present report provides further details on the work of the Centre, illustrating how the Centre, over the past two years, organized 127 workshops; 38 side events, panels, seminars, and briefings; and engaged with more than 4,700 participants from over 60 Member States.[…] The Office of Counter-Terrorism, in particular through the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, is currently implementing over 40 capacity-building programmes benefiting more than 70 Member States. In 2019, it trained more than 2,500 people. During the same period, it conducted 19 expert meetings, 11 technical missions, 29 outreach events, 13 thematic regional events and 6 regional high-level conferences.'

[300] Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 31.

[301] Ibid, p 31.

302 UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 54: 'In order to fulfil its mandate outlined above and achieve full visibility into relevant programmes, projects and activities, the Under-Secretary-General of UNOCT established in March 2019, within the framework of the Counter-Terrorism Compact, a Working Group on Resource Mobilization, Monitoring and Evaluation.'

303 UN GA (2019), op cit, para 43.

304 Global Center on Cooperative Security, op cit, p 37; FIDH, op cit, p 43.

305 That is, 'a secure online platform that connects Global Compact entities with Member States in order to share relevant information, expertise and resources, with a view to developing a repository of knowledge on how to implement the Strategy in a more effective and balanced way'. (UN GA (2019), op cit, para 11).

306 UNDP (2019), 'Risk Management For Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Programmes: Guidance Note For Practitioners', UNDP (www.shareweb.ch/site/Conflict-and-Human-Rights/Documents/Risk%20Management%20for%20PVE%20-%20UNDP%20Guidance.pdf); UNDP, International Alert (2018), 'Improving the impact of preventing violent extremism programming: A toolkit for design, monitoring and evaluation', UNDP (https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/PVE_ImprovingImpactProgrammingToolkit_2018.pdf)

307 UN (2020), 'United Nations Guidance Note: Protection and Promotion of Civic Space', New York: UN, September (www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN_Guidance_Note.pdf)

308 See UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December, pp ix, 5-8, 77ff. The draft results framework elaborates 3 strategic objectives and a total of 18 outcomes contributing to them, together with suggested indicators, data sources and data collection methods.

309 UN GA (2019), op cit, para 20; UN Women, op cit.

310 UN Sustainable Development Group (2003), 'The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies', New York: UNSDG (https://unsdg.un.org/resources/human-rights-based-approach-development-cooperation-towards-common-understanding-among-un)

311 That is, 'country assessments, recommendations, surveys and analytical products of the Directorate continuously inform the development and implementation of capacity-building projects of the Office, there are mechanisms in place for sharing mission reports, assessments and other analytical products in a timely manner, and both entities have undertaken joint missions, including assessment missions.' (UN GA (2019), op cit, para 9).

312 Annual UNCCT reports are available via the publications section of UNOCT's website.

313 OIOS, op cit.

314 KPMG, op cit.

315 UNODC (2020), 'Prevention of crime and violent extremism: meta-synthesis', Vienna: UNODC.

316 UN (2021a), 'Learn better, together: independent meta-synthesis under the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy', Vienna: UN, December.

317 UN GA (2020a), 'Activities of the United Nations system in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Report of the Secretary-General', A/74/677, New York: UN GA, 7 February, para 54 describes this as a 'mapping of all the programmes, projects and activities implemented by the Counter-Terrorism Compact entities under the four pillars[…] to review and evaluate the current portfolio of projects implemented by all Counter-Terrorism Compact entities and to determine overall responsiveness of the Counter-Terrorism Compact entities to the technical assistance needs identified by CTED as a result of its technical assessment missions' and 'to establish a baseline against which further developments, changes and progress will be reported to Member States'.