

Implementing International Counter-Terrorism Standards and Best Practices

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“From Norms to Practice: How to Improve States’ Implementation of the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Mandates”

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The *Report on Standards and Best Practices for Improving States’ Implementation of UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Mandates (prepared by the Center on Global Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, for the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 2006)* has brought us up-to-date on currently available important standards and best practices to build capacity of states to prevent and suppress acts of terrorism. The information provided is vital to improving global efforts against terrorism and transnational criminal activities linked to terrorism.

I am particularly pleased that the report has highlighted the positive results of efforts which began in the first year of the CTC to encourage international specialized organizations such as ICAO, WCO, IMO and Interpol to develop counter-terrorism security standards within their competences and programs of assistance for their members.

I am disappointed, however, that sufficient efforts have not been put into developing the capacity of regional and sub-regional organizations to facilitate assistance to their members and ensuring region-wide implementation of international counter-terrorism standards and best practices. The improved capacity of these organizations to be partners in the global efforts against terrorism is integral to the process. Those regional organizations that have achieved significant levels of competence in this area have benefited from available financial and technical resources within the region or targeted by donor states with a particular interest in the region. Others continue to suffer from lack of available resources.

I see two fundamental problems both of which have been highlighted time and time again, and raised once more in this report:

1. The lack of access to information which exist in many countries with limited capability, both in terms of technology and human resources; and
2. The lack of, or too little assistance, for so-called “non-critical” states in the provision of technical assistance, including technology and human resources development.

The report has highlighted these two problems and rightly emphasized the need for greater focus from assistance providers in these areas, in particular, the provision of technology to complement the training of personnel. This is important to law

enforcement, migration control, customs, financial investigation units, and other security-related areas. However, there remains a huge gap in some regions which are receiving very little attention from the donor community for security-related assistance.

On this issue: I would like to debunk the fiction that development assistance should be divorced from security assistance. This contributes to the seemingly lack of support by UN development bodies, agencies and programs for security-related capacity-building. Donors to these agencies oftentimes put stipulations on their contributions which prevent the agencies from paying attention to security-related development issues. Others tell development agencies that security is not within their mandates and deny support to them for development-related security projects.

There is no denial that there is a strong security-development nexus. I have been talking to Permanent Representatives of developing countries and others about this issue since 2002, and they all agree that sustainable development is linked to the level of security in their countries. The issue of security for sustainable development was on the agenda of the Barbados + 10 Conference of small island developing states in Mauritius in January 2005. Very little has been done to advance this issue in the relevant development bodies since then. And that indictment includes international and regional financial institutions.

I have found that there is strong political will by many countries to implement the provisions of resolution 1373 and other counter-terrorism resolutions. And, when I speak of countries in this context, I am speaking specifically about developing countries with democratically elected governments. However, many are skeptical that they will receive the technical assistance they need, should they come forward and declare their security deficiencies.

This is particularly true for countries in a region or sub-region which is not seen as critical to the so-called war on terrorism. They believe that declaring their deficiencies would negatively reflect on them and could result in serious domestic political implications, as well as expose them to possible exploitation by international criminal networks, including terrorist groups seeking a haven or base from which to target other countries or the interests of a target country within their territory.

Most countries no longer need to be told what they need to do or why they should do it. What they need to be told is how they can get it done when they lack human, technical and financial resources to do it.

Merely informing countries about international standards and best practices is just not enough. The CTC/CTED and assistance providers must be able to assure these countries that they will receive the assistance they need in a timely manner to implement them. This assurance cannot be by words alone, but must be done through a proven track record that is made public and transparent. Show them what has been done to help those countries that have come forward to seek assistance for counter-terrorism capacity-building, and countries lacking counter-terrorism capacity will be far more inclined to cooperate and get the job done.

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