



United Nations General Assembly | Sixth Committee
Measures to eliminate international terrorism
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Madam Chairperson,

As it is the first time that Brazil takes the floor, let me congratulate you on your election and express our full support to you and to the Bureau in this session. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretariat for its most recent Report on measures taken to eliminate international terrorism.

Brazil condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The repudiation of terrorism is enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution as a guiding principle of our foreign policy. Our commitment to fighting terrorism has also been translated into domestic legislation, which is now completely within the standards of the Financial Action Task Force.

Madam Chairperson,

The General Assembly has recently adopted the 7th Review of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy, after long negotiations that almost resulted in no consensus. One of the main challenges was to design a global strategy for a threat that the international community has never been able to define. Despite all international conventions criminalizing certain terrorist acts, despite all Security Council resolutions with binding obligations on counterterrorism and despite the seven GCTS reviews, we still have no agreement on what constitutes terrorism. This is a task that the Sixth Committee has yet to fulfill.

The current set of conventions prohibiting well-specified acts related to terrorism lacks the unity and coherence that the Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism (CCIT) would provide. The stalemate in CCIT negotiations is linked to the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition of terrorism, which is detrimental to our shared goal of eliminating it. The emergence of new expressions, such as radicalism and violent extremism, add further confusion, both in understanding the causes and in seeking the best ways to prevent and counter these phenomena.

Session after session, the Sixth Committee updates its resolution on measures to eliminate international terrorism and renews the mandate of the Working Group tasked to finalize the CCIT. Every year, we formally meet in the Working Group, where the same arguments are repeated and no progress is made. Time is ripe to reassess the format of our discussions. If we want to make progress in the various items of the Sixth Committee agenda, we should set the example with the CCIT, a topic that has been pending for too long.

There is a pressing need to overcome the stalemate in the negotiating processes leading to the adoption of the CCIT. We are conscious that taking the final step will require a strong political will. This is why Brazil argues that convening a high-level conference under the auspices of the UN could provide the momentum needed to build the necessary bridges. The preparatory process for the CCIT could take place in the realm of a reconvened Ad Hoc Committee.

Madam Chairperson,

Terrorism is a multidimensional threat that can only be addressed through comprehensive approaches, taking into account political, economic, legal and security factors. This is why the General Assembly has a unique role and the primary responsibility in the United Nations to address the issue of international terrorism. However, in the past years, there has been a shift in the decision-making power from the UNGA to the UNSC on many counterterrorism issues, which represents more than an institutional change. It has implications to the law on the use of force and might illustrate a change in the preferred responses to terrorism.

The Sixth Committee can contribute to enhance the role of the UNGA in counterterrorism efforts. For that, a smarter division of labor is needed. Driven by the wish to revitalize the work of the Sixth Committee, Brazil encourages a reflection on how to use the current agenda item more efficiently, avoiding overlap and duplication with the discussions held at plenary level for GCTS reviews. In our view, the best alternative to rationalize our work is to focus our deliberations on the outstanding legal questions in the realm of counterterrorism.

We have already mentioned one outstanding legal issue, which is the conclusion of CCIT and the definition of terrorism. Another topic refers to attempts to reinterpret the law regarding the prohibition to the use of force and its self-defense exception in counterterrorism measures. All countries have a stake in the issue of the legality of the use of force. The promotion of new understandings on the content and scope of self-defense should be discussed by all member states. For Brazil, as a matter of law and of policy, exceptions to Art 2(4) of the UN Charter must be interpreted restrictively. On the specific issue of self-defense, the International Court of Justice has repeatedly indicated that it is a right that only applies between States.

Madam Chairperson,

Counter-terrorism efforts will only be sustainable and effective if consistent with the UN Charter and other norms of international law, including human rights, humanitarian and refugee laws. If counterterrorism takes place at the expense of international legal parameters, it will have defeated its purpose - and maybe contributed to yield additional extremism conducive to terrorism.

Thank you.