



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Factsheet

Action against Terrorism Unit

TERRORISM IS A SHARED AND GROWING CONCERN FOR OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES. AS THE THREAT OF TERRORISM IS TRANSNATIONAL IT CANNOT BE DEFEATED BY ANY ONE STATE ALONE. CONCERTED INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IS CRUCIAL FOR EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND CO-OPERATION AMONG PARTICIPATING STATES IS SEEN AS A VITAL ELEMENT OF COUNTERING TERRORISM. THE OSCE, THROUGH ITS ACTION AGAINST TERRORISM UNIT (ATU), ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTES TO THESE EFFORTS.

Counter-terrorism and the OSCE

Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to OSCE participating States and it is likely to remain a shared security challenge in the foreseeable future. Concerted international co-operation is crucial for effective policy implementation and co-operation among participating States is seen as a vital element of countering terrorism within the framework of the OSCE.

The OSCE's efforts to counter terrorism reflect the Organization's comprehensive approach to security which encompasses the politico-military, the economic and environmental, as well as the human dimensions of security. Accordingly, the OSCE addresses a broad range of terrorism-related issues, such as enhancing legal co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism, suppressing terrorist financing, and protecting human rights in the fight against terrorism.

OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit

The ATU was established in 2002 as the co-ordinating focal point and facilitator of OSCE counter-terrorism activities. The Unit assists OSCE participating States in implementing anti-terrorism commitments, thereby enhancing their overall capacities to prevent and combat terrorism. It liaises with other international, regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as with the delegations of the participating States to the OSCE. As a result, the Unit's work adds value to global counter-terrorism endeavours and avoids any unnecessary duplication of efforts.

OSCE counter-terrorism mandate

The OSCE is a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and the legal framework for the OSCE's action against terrorism is found in the universal anti-terrorism conventions and protocols as well as the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in particular UNSCR 1373 (2001) – which among other things calls upon all states “to co-operate, particularly through bilateral and multilateral arrangements and agreements, to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks and take action against perpetrators of such acts”.

Relying on these overarching documents, participating States have adopted a series of OSCE commitments developing specific counter-terrorism mandates for the Organization. The *Bucharest Plan of Action (2001)* – which laid the groundwork for the establishment of the ATU – and the *Porto Charter on Preventing and Combating Terrorism (2002)* – which codified the OSCE principles in the struggle against terrorism – constitute the Organization's blueprint for a comprehensive effort in the fight against terrorism. Subsequently, each Ministerial Council meeting has further strengthened and expanded the OSCE's counter-terrorism mandate.

OSCE commitments firmly reiterate that counter-terrorism measures are to be conducted in accordance with international law, in particular international human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law.



ATU programmes and activities

Promoting international legal frameworks

The ATU promotes and strengthens the international legal framework against terrorism. Co-operating with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Unit organizes national and sub-regional workshops promoting the ratification of the now 16 universal anti-terrorism conventions and protocols. The ATU offers assistance to participating States in drafting legislation for the appropriate criminalization of terrorist offences. OSCE participating States recognize that no counter-terrorism activity can be effective if it is not based on a strong legal framework. In 2001 they committed themselves to becoming party to the 12 universal anti-terrorism conventions and protocols which were in force at that time. Today, the Unit's work extends beyond ratification to implementing the provisions of the relevant treaties into national legislation, which is required by international law and is necessary for efficient co-operation.

Enhancing international co-operation in criminal matters

The ATU enhances international legal co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism. Since 2005, the ATU, jointly with the UNODC, has organized several training workshops on international co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism, addressing issues such as mutual legal assistance and extradition, as well as promoting the universal, and where applicable European, legal framework related to terrorism and co-operation in criminal matters, and encouraging the broader use of technical assistance tools for facilitating this co-operation. OSCE participating States recognize that many terrorism-related crimes are transnational and that cross-border legal co-operation is often necessary to successfully investigate and prosecute perpetrators. They have therefore committed themselves to enhancing legal co-operation in criminal matters to counter terrorism and this ATU programme assists them in their efforts.

Enhancing passport/travel document security

The ATU assists participating States in improving travel document security. Since 2003, the ATU, together with the International Civil

Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Interpol, has organized national expert visits and numerous workshops on travel document security, including on the implementation of electronic passports and ICAO Handling and Issuance standards – the global benchmark. The Unit facilitates implementation of OSCE commitments on the use of Interpol's database of lost and stolen travel documents (ASF-SLTD) which targets the misuse of travel documents that have been reported to Interpol as lost or stolen. It serves as a vital tool for preventing the movement of terrorists, as required by UNSCR 1373 (2001) and the *Bucharest Plan of Action (2001)*. Therefore, the ATU conducts training of national border control authorities to enhance their capacities to detect and prevent the use of counterfeit travel documents.

Promoting public-private partnerships

The ATU promotes public-private partnerships (PPPs) between state authorities, the business sector and civil society in most of its counter-terrorism activities. In 2007 the OSCE organized a high-level political PPP conference which explored the potential of such co-operation and identified existing gaps and best practices. OSCE participating States acknowledged that states are primarily responsible for preventing and countering terrorism and for managing the consequences of terrorist acts, but should draw on the support of the business community and civil society as a whole to successfully counter those threats. Therefore, the OSCE organizes follow-up events, focusing e.g. on the role of civil society and the media in the fight against terrorism, as well as the role of PPPs in protecting critical infrastructures.

Combating the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes

The ATU combats terrorist use of the Internet by identifying emerging trends as well as potential counter-measures. Since 2004, the Unit has devoted several OSCE-wide events to this issue allowing experts to share and showcase national best practices, as well as promoting relevant human rights aspects. The OSCE is also considering follow-up activities aimed at addressing cyber-security in a comprehensive manner. The work



conducted within this portfolio recognizes that the Internet has become a strategic device and a tactical facilitator for terrorists and is used for a variety of purposes such as identifying, recruiting and training new members, collecting and transferring funds, organizing terrorist acts, and inciting terrorist violence. Use of computer systems and the Internet as weapons for cyber-attacks is also a growing concern and the OSCE is becoming a leader in combating this threat.

Enhancing container/supply-chain security

The ATU supports participating States' efforts to enhance container and supply chain security by organizing expert meetings and training workshops. Recognizing that the supply chain not only represents an attractive target for terrorist attacks, but could potentially also be abused by terrorists for smuggling, the Unit supports and facilitates the work of relevant specialized structures and organizations, in particular the World Customs Organization (WCO) and its Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate International Trade (SAFE) – the key international instrument. Co-operating with relevant actors, the ATU continues to promote the development and implementation of a concept for a comprehensive and integrated approach to further improve the security of the entire supply chain from origin to destination.

Countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism

The ATU, as the focal point for co-ordinating and facilitating OSCE counter-terrorism activities, actively promotes discussions among stakeholders aimed at identifying good practices and possible future activities to counter violent extremism and radicalization that could lead some to commit acts of terrorism. To combat terrorism it is vital to minimize the potential recruitment of new individuals by terrorist groups. Accordingly, a 2007 OSCE Ministerial Statement in support of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy emphasized the strategic importance of addressing the spread of violent extremism and the process of radicalization that lead to terrorism. Participating States reaffirmed that the OSCE would continue its activities to address these issues and are considering how the Organization, with a multidimensional approach, could foster better understanding of these phenomena.

Protecting critical energy infrastructures

The ATU promotes enhanced co-operation and co-ordination among participating States on measures to increase the protection of critical energy infrastructures and to effectively address preparedness and consequence management issues, including through PPPs. The Unit also examines, and reports to participating States on, opportunities for OSCE co-operation with relevant actors, and facilitates the exchange of best practices as well as sharing of information on terrorist threats and effective responses. Specifically, OSCE participating States have recognized that critical energy infrastructures, such as nuclear power plants or refineries, can be particularly vulnerable to terrorist attacks and that their disruption or destruction could have a serious impact on the health, safety, security and economic well-being of citizens.

OSCE Counter-Terrorism Network

The ATU, through its web-based Counter-Terrorism Network (CTN), facilitates and stimulates the exchange of information among counter terrorism practitioners – a key pillar in the fight against terrorism. The Unit publishes the monthly OSCE CTN Newsletter, which summarizes the most pertinent counter-terrorism developments and is circulated in both English and Russian to some 350 CTN contact points within OSCE participating States, to regional and international organizations, and to OSCE Institutions and field operations. Continuous growth in the number of newsletter contributors as well as in the number of readers indicates that the CTN and its newsletter are seen as valuable means for information sharing among peers.

Identifying and addressing current and emerging terrorist threats

The ATU seeks to assist participating States in identifying terrorist trends and cutting-edge options for response within the OSCE framework. In particular, the Unit addresses the changing security concerns of participating States relating to current and emerging terrorist threats. Together with relevant partners, the ATU has e.g. organized expert workshops on topical issues such as the threat of Man-Portable-Air-Defence-Systems (MANPADS) to civil aviation (2004), suicide terrorism (2005) and urban transport security (2006).



International co-operation

The ATU routinely collaborates with other relevant actors, based on realistic assessments of their respective comparative advantages and abilities to fill any gaps and avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. The Unit actively co-operates with more than twenty UN structures, international, regional and sub-regional organizations and specialized agencies to support their counter-terrorism related activities, share experiences and facilitate contacts between national authorities and international experts. Such co-operation is crucial because, just as no single state can effectively combat terrorism alone, no single organization can do so on its own.

The ATU has pioneered the concept of bringing together working-level counter-terrorism practitioners at specialized roundtables. Such events supplement various higher-level meetings of regional and international organizations, and have contributed to enhanced co-operation and co-ordination in combating terrorism. They provide practitioners with opportunities to network and discuss the substance of their work, including concrete practical matters such as project and programme implementation.

Looking ahead: future programmes and activities

The ATU seeks to remain on the cutting edge of counter-terrorism by not only developing existing programmes and projects, but also by identifying emerging threats and innovative responses. The Unit will continue to promote the formulation and implementation of a long-term, comprehensive approach to countering terrorism, compliant with human rights and international law.

The ATU will continue promoting PPPs in countering terrorism. Such endeavours will require sustained co-operative

efforts. Fostering PPPs with civil society, as well as with the media, in combating terrorism is particularly important. Further enhancing the co-operation between state authorities and the business community is also viewed as an essential component of increasing the security of critical infrastructures and suppressing new, creative forms of terrorism financing. The ATU also seeks to continue supporting the Organization's engagement in the strategic area of countering radicalization and violent extremism that lead to terrorism.

An area of additional emphasis will be the promotion of integrated approaches and improving preparedness and consequence management in relevant areas such as critical infrastructures, in particular critical energy infrastructures, as well as supply chain security. In line with relevant OSCE provisions, the ATU will also strive to incorporate a gender perspective in its activities.

To do this the ATU will seek to work with an expanding group of public and private actors and institutions, offering a co-operative platform tailored to the needs of OSCE participating States.

Contact information

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The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) works for **stability, prosperity** and **democracy** in 56 States through political dialogue about shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference.