

Countering Terrorism: the OSCE as a Regional Model

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*International Terrorism Conference
Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies
London, 2 October 2008*

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues,

It is an honour for me to be here among such distinguished panellists. My remarks today will focus on the multilateral perspective and approach to countering terrorism of my organization, the Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

With your permission, I would like to start my remarks with a few words on how I, as Head of the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU), view terrorism. I will then touch upon the role of regional organizations in the fight against terrorism, explain about the OSCE approach to countering terrorism, and brief you on our intended future activities.

Terrorism, regardless of its origin or purpose, if left unchecked for long enough, becomes a process. It becomes a process with vested interests in continuing that process. There are supply chains, salaries paid, fundraising efforts, training camps, recruitment, advertising and marketing, community services, indoctrination, and many other activities that all form a micro economy. The fight against terrorism has to be as multidimensional and complex as the threat itself. The bottom line is that we are dealing with a process, or indeed multiple processes with various groups involved. And we need to address terrorism as such, as a process, requiring a comprehensive and sustainable response.

There are many facilitators to this process, such as logistical and ideological facilitators. We need to keep increasing pressure on a broad range of these facilitators in order to mitigate them. We have to identify cutting-edge areas and options for policy response, focusing resources where they have the greatest impact in disrupting or abating the process of terrorism. This is what OSCE counter-terrorism activities are aiming at.

I would suggest to you that terrorism is a business as much as it is a political phenomenon, regardless of its origins and motives. And like any other business, it feeds on its own success. It also feeds on social conditions that incubate recruits. To an extent, terrorism is similar to petty crime. Where petty crime is left unchecked, it increases. And arguably, we must accept the fact that the world has waited too long to nip terrorism in the bud.

The role of regional organizations in the global fight against terrorism

So how do I see the role of regional organizations in countering terrorism, and specifically the OSCE? Terrorism is a global, regional, and local phenomenon. Hence, effective counter-terrorism work requires an approach which incorporates all these perspectives. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy recognizes and calls for the active role of regional organizations in the fight against terrorism. And the OSCE and other regional organizations have a lot to offer in this regard.

Regional organizations have a substantive expertise and knowledge of the situation on the ground, often gained through field offices – like the OSCE which has field offices in 17 different countries. Such offices are ideally situated to develop approaches taking into account on the ground region specific, cultural, and other contextual issues. Regional organizations can thus serve as transmission belts among States for measures adopted at the global level. They can also develop and undertake region-specific initiatives that complement and build upon existing global counter-terrorism objectives.

The OSCE recognizes that the United Nations plays the leading role in counter-terrorism matters from a global perspective. The OSCE is, after all, a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. As a matter of fact, it is actually the largest regional organization with 56 participating States, spanning from North America to Central Asia. We also have 11 partner countries in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Moreover, the OSCE has a comprehensive security mandate, as opposed to the specialized mandates of some other organizations.

The position of the OSCE *vis a vis* terrorism is highlighted in a decision adopted unanimously in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks against the United States. This decision reads:

“Terrorist acts in all forms and manifestations, committed no matter when, where or by whom, are a threat to international and regional peace, security and stability. There must be no safe haven for those perpetrating, financing, harbouring or otherwise supporting those responsible for such criminal acts. Terrorism, whatever its motivation or origin, has no justification.”

Over the years, the OSCE has developed a comprehensive framework for counter-terrorism action. We have been actively contributing to the global effort to fight terrorism by developing a variety of commitments and by helping national authorities develop their counter-terrorism capacities. Different structures of my organization are active in each of the 4 pillars outlined in the United Nation Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, namely:

- 1) Measures to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism;
- 2) Measures to prevent and combat terrorism;
- 3) Measures to build state capacity to prevent and combat terrorism; and
- 4) Measures to ensure respect, protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law as the fundamental basis in the fight against terrorism.

Within the OSCE, core executive structures carry out these responsibilities. My Unit, the ATU, coordinates OSCE counter-terrorism activities and is the focal point for international co-operation in this area. The OSCE Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Affairs (OCEEA) provides assistance on countering terrorist financing. The OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit and Borders Team are active in the field of law enforcement capacity-building. And also, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) works in the field of protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism.

OSCE approach to countering terrorism

Let me now outline the OSCE approach to countering terrorism. The OSCE and the ATU approach to security and countering terrorism is comprehensive. It encompasses political-military issues, economic and environmental issues, and incorporates the human element of security. These are our so-called comprehensive three dimensions.

Our approach to countering terrorism is not only comprehensive in terms of *issues*. It is also inclusive in terms of the *actors* we seek to involve in our activities, including civil society and business organizations.

Our counter-terrorism efforts seek to be preventive by addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. At the same time we also focus on concrete security enhancement measures and capacity building.

Support for the work of my Unit has been traditionally strong among participating States.

Overall, we see the OSCE as playing an important counter-terrorism role in five main directions:

- 1) Building political support;
- 2) Enhancing the capacity of States to counter terrorism;
- 3) Identifying cutting edge threats and options for response;
- 4) Fostering international co-operation on counter-terrorism issues, and
- 5) Promoting security within the framework of human rights.

Building political support

An important OSCE role is to build consensus and political support among participating States over the threat of terrorism and measures to counter it. We raise awareness of the terrorist threat. We help mobilize political will to address it in a comprehensive and expedient manner. We generate political support for the implementation of the Conventions and Protocols related to terrorism, the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and other documents. We also actively support the application of standards, recommendations and good practices developed by different specialized global organizations and agencies.

Let me give you a few examples of some of our counter-terrorism programmes and activities. OSCE participating States have adopted a number of commitments on enhancing the international legal framework against terrorism. Together with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) we promote legislative implementation of these instruments. Since 2001, the ratification rate of these instruments has increased by some 30 percent in the OSCE area. This ratification rate is among the highest in the world. We consider this to be a major achievement.

Similarly, the OSCE has developed a number of commitments which support adherence to security standards and measures elaborated by specialized international organizations and bodies. Examples of standards and measures we have focused on include:

- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) minimum security standards for the handling and issuance of passports;
- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations on terrorist financing; the World Customs Organization (WCO) Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE);
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources;
- The INTERPOL Lost and Stolen documents database.

I am glad to be able to say that many of those organizations have acknowledged that OSCE support has contributed to increased implementation of their standards.

Supporting capacity-building assistance

Of course, it is not enough to simply raise awareness and promote acceptance of international instruments and standards. Such standards and instruments require implementation. And in order to implement them, one needs the capacity to do so. A need exists to foster state capacity to implement and comply with those instruments and standards.

In this regard, the OSCE plays an active role by supporting and facilitating capacity-building programmes of specialized international organizations, such as ICAO, UNODC, and WCO. We are actively co-operating with relevant organizations in the areas of:

- Promoting ratification and legislative implementation of the universal anti-terrorism conventions and protocols;
- Enhancing legal co-operation in criminal matters related to terrorism;
- Enhancing travel document security;
- Combating money laundering and terrorist financing;
- Enhancing border control and management, including customs control and supply chain security;
- as well as in promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in countering terrorism.

Our collaboration with ICAO on travel document security, with the UNODC on legal co-operation, and with the WCO on container/supply chain security is considered by many to be exemplary.

Identifying cutting edge threats and options for response

The OSCE ATU also seeks to identify cutting-edge threats and options for response. As a regional organization, we are uniquely well placed to know the concerns of our constituency. Important here is the identification and sharing of information about cutting-edge threats and options for response. In consultation with relevant partners, we raise awareness of these threats and propose options to address them in the OSCE framework.

Let me give you some concrete examples:

- In 2004 the OSCE and ICAO held the first ever large-scale conference on countering the threat of Man-Portable-Air-Defence-Systems (MANPADS) to civil aviation around airports.
- In 2005 we organized an OSCE-wide workshop focusing on suicide terrorism and a conference on non-banking conduits for the financing of terrorism.
- In 2006 we partnered with the International Organization of Public Transport (UITP) in organizing a workshop on urban transport security.
- In 2007 we organized events on enhancing PPPs in countering terrorism, as well as on combating incitement to terrorism on the Internet.

We consider the identification of gaps, trends, and options for response as an important element of our contribution as a regional organization to the global effort against terrorism. The sharing of good practices, experiences, and lessons learned is an important component of such efforts.

Fostering international co-operation

Fostering international co-operation is a core component of the OSCE counter-terrorism portfolio. Central here is establishing collaborative relationships and co-operating with an array of institutions and organizations active in the counter terrorism field. For example, a need exists to enhance co-ordination and co-operation between the UN structures and other global organizations on the one hand, and regional and sub-regional organizations on the other. We consider such co-ordination essential as it aligns priorities and approaches, better leverages resources, and minimizes duplication of efforts.

In our counter-terrorism efforts, my Unit, the Action against Terrorism Unit, regularly co-operates with more than twenty UN structures, international, regional, and sub-regional organizations – including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). We support their counter-terrorism related activities; we share experiences, and we 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 alone.

For example: In 2006 and 2007, the ATU organized working-level roundtables for counter-terrorism practitioners from regional and sub-regional organizations. Such events have supplemented various higher-level meetings of regional and international organizations. Such roundtables provided practitioners with opportunities to network, to share information, and to co-ordinate approaches on matters such as project and programme implementation.

Promoting security within the framework of human rights

In addition to strengthening international co-operation, promoting security within the framework of human rights is a cornerstone of OSCE counter-terrorism activity. Relevant 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.

The OSCE also has a separate body dealing with the protection of human rights, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). ODIHR offers participating States options for technical assistance and relevant advice on the protection and promotion of human rights in the fight against terrorism, and actively promotes tolerance and non-discrimination.

Looking ahead: future activities

Let me now briefly touch upon some of our plans for the future. Terrorism is likely to remain a shared security challenge for OSCE participating States in the foreseeable future. I believe we will see more of it, not less. In response, my 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 seek to remain on the cutting edge of counter-terrorism – not only by developing existing programmes and projects, but also by identifying emerging threats and innovative responses. In particular, we will continue promoting public-private partnerships in countering terrorism. This will require sustained co-operative efforts, in particular with respect to civil society organizations, the media, and industry.

Countering terrorism requires minimizing the recruitment of new members by terrorist groups. Thus, countering radicalization and violent extremism that lead to terrorism is a strategic area of importance. At the end of October, the ATU is organizing a workshop on preventing radicalization and violent extremism, at the initiative of, and with the support of, the United Kingdom.

Looking ahead, we also plan to emphasize the promotion of integrated strategic approaches to critical infrastructure protection, in particular critical energy infrastructure, and supply chain security. This includes improving co-operation and co-ordination of preparedness and response capabilities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to leave you with one thought. Terrorism is a truly global issue in which we all have a stake. International co-operation is indispensable – we are all in the same boat.

United, ongoing, comprehensive policies and actions are the only effective method of disrupting the process of terrorism. The OSCE plays a major international role in identifying, facilitating, and implementing co-operative anti-terror programmes.

United we stand strong. Divided we stumble, and perhaps even fall. I thank you for your attention and look forward to any questions you may have.

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