



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
27 April 2006

Original: English

---

## Sixtieth session

Agenda items 46 and 120

### **Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields**

#### **Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit**

## **Uniting against terrorism: recommendations for a global counter-terrorism strategy**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. As Member States will recall, in 2004 the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change recommended in its report (A/59/565) that I promote a comprehensive global strategy against terrorism, one that would strengthen the ability of responsible States to counter terrorism and promote the rule of law, all while protecting human rights. In Madrid in March of the following year, on the one-year anniversary of the train bombings that killed and maimed more than 1,600 innocent people, I took up the challenge and set out elements of such a strategy. These consisted of five pillars: dissuading people from resorting to terrorism or supporting it; denying terrorists the means to carry out an attack; deterring States from supporting terrorism; developing State capacity to defeat terrorism; and defending human rights. Later the same month, in my report, entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security, and human rights for all" (A/59/2005), I urged Member States to adopt a strategy along those lines.

2. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1), Member States welcomed those elements of a strategy, and agreed to develop them further. They requested that I submit proposals to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to assist States in combating terrorism and to enhance the coordination of United Nations activities in this regard. In December 2005, the President of the General Assembly asked me for a report on capacity-building, as well as for additional inputs of relevance for the forthcoming work of the General Assembly on a counter-terrorism strategy.

3. In response to those requests, the present report contains recommendations for a global counter-terrorism strategy, with an emphasis on specific proposals for strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to combat terrorism. In formulating these recommendations, I have been assisted by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which I created in 2005 to bring together key actors in the United Nations system and its partners dealing with counter-terrorism issues. The Task Force is the first step in ensuring that United Nations departments, funds, programmes, agencies and other related entities contribute fully to counter-terrorism efforts, while maximizing synergies and avoiding duplication of work.

4. A real strategy is more than simply a list of laudable goals or an observation of the obvious. To say that we seek to prevent future acts of terrorism and that we seek better responses in the event of a terrorist attack does not amount to a strategy. Only when it guides us in the accomplishment of our goals is a strategy worthy of its name. In order to unite against terrorism, we need an operational strategy that will enable us to work together to counter terrorism. As laid out here, my recommendations for a strategy seek to both guide and unite us by emphasizing operational elements of dissuasion, denial, deterrence, development of State capacity and defence of human rights. What is common to all of these elements is the indispensability of the rule of law, nationally and internationally, in countering the threat of terrorism.

5. Inherent to the rule of law is the defence of human rights — a core value of the United Nations and a fundamental pillar of our work. Effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing ones. Accordingly, the defence of human rights is essential to the fulfilment of all aspects of a counter-terrorism strategy. The central role of human rights is therefore highlighted in every substantive section of this report, in addition to a section on human rights per se.

6. Victims of terrorist acts are denied their most fundamental human rights. Accordingly, a counter-terrorism strategy must emphasize the victims and promote their rights. In addition, implementing a global strategy that relies in part on dissuasion, is firmly grounded in human rights and the rule of law, and gives focus to victims depends on the active participation and leadership of civil society. Therefore, highlighted throughout this report is the role civil society can play in promoting a truly global strategy against terrorism.

**2. Nuclear, biological, chemical or radiological weapons**

47. A nuclear, biological, chemical or radiological terrorist attack would have a devastatingly far-reaching impact. In addition to causing widespread death and destruction, it could deal a crippling blow to the world economy and drive millions of people into dire poverty. An ensuing effect on infant mortality could unleash a second wave of deaths throughout the developing world.

48. Our common goal must be to secure, and wherever possible eliminate, nuclear, biological, chemical or radiological weapons and implement effective domestic and export controls on dual-use materials related to weapons of mass destruction. Although there exist distinct challenges for controlling the peaceful use of each type of hazardous material, United Nations organizations like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons have been working with Member States to address these challenges. That vital work must be strengthened.

49. Equally, States should reinforce existing non-proliferation mechanisms and create effective tools to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, consistent with relevant international treaties. As stressed, inter alia, in the Riyadh Declaration adopted at the Counter-Terrorism International Conference held in February 2005, there is, inter alia, a need to strengthen international measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and to support the role of the United Nations in this respect. States must fully implement Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) by enacting and enforcing effective national legal and regulatory measures to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. I also urge Member States to take steps specified in General Assembly resolution 60/78 on measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and resolution 60/73 on preventing the risk of radiological terrorism.

50. A majority of States have reported to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) on the status of their planned steps in fulfilling the resolution's requirements, including those pertaining to domestic and export controls and contributions to international cooperation. Yet, as at 19 April 2006, 62 States had not yet reported to the Committee. I urge them to do so without delay. Those reports help to identify and close gaps in the system that terrorists might exploit.

51. The recent adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which aims to assist States in thwarting terrorist groups

possessing nuclear material and in post-crisis situations by rendering the nuclear material safe in accordance with safeguards provided by IAEA, is a major advance in multilateral efforts to prevent nuclear terrorism. I call on all States to become parties to it and implement it fully. The same applies to the amended Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. I also commend the Global Threat Reduction Initiative and the beneficial work that it has brought about.

### **3. The challenge of biological terrorism**

52. The most important under-addressed threat relating to terrorism, and one which acutely requires new thinking on the part of the international community, is that of terrorists using a biological weapon. Biotechnology, like computer technology, has developed exponentially. Such advances herald promising breakthroughs and are one of the key battlefronts in our attempts to eliminate the infectious diseases that kill upwards of 14 million people every year. They can, however, also bring incalculable harm if put to destructive use by those who seek to develop designer diseases and pathogens.

53. We find ourselves now at a point akin to the period in the 1950s, when farsighted citizens, scientists, diplomats and international civil servants recognized the enormous potential impact, both good and bad, of nuclear power. The challenge then was to harness the power of nuclear energy for civilian purposes, and to minimize its use and spread in nuclear weapons. The result was the creation of IAEA and, eventually, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The answer to biotechnology's dual-use dilemma will look very different. But the approach to developing it must be equally ambitious.

54. Preventing bioterrorism requires innovative solutions specific to the nature of the threat. Biotechnology is not like nuclear technology. Soon, tens of thousands of laboratories worldwide will be operating in a multi-billion-dollar industry. Even students working in small laboratories will be able to carry out gene manipulation. The approach to fighting the abuse of biotechnology for terrorist purposes will have more in common with measures against cybercrime than with the work to control nuclear proliferation.

55. Many Member States see biological weapons as a State-sponsored threat, for which the proper antidote is the Biological Weapons Convention. Indeed, the Convention does need strengthening and I hope that progress is made at the forthcoming Sixth Review Conference. Nonetheless, we need additional measures to address the problem of non-State actors.

56. International dialogue has begun through the follow-up process to the Biological Weapons Convention, while civil society has made novel efforts to address the dual-use issue. The International Committee of the Red Cross has sought to bring attention to the problem among Governments, industry and scientific communities. The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, working together with various national academies of science, has drafted a code of conduct for scientists working in the biotechnology field.

57. These efforts are to be applauded but, unless they are brought together, their effects will be diffuse. What we need now is a forum that will bring together the various stakeholders — Governments, industry, science, public health, security, the public writ large — into a common programme, built from the bottom up, to ensure

that biotechnology's advances are used for the public good and that the benefits are shared equitably around the world. Such an effort must ensure that nothing is done to impede the potential positive benefits from this technology. The United Nations is well placed to coordinate and facilitate such a forum, and to bring to the table a wide range of relevant actors. I urge Member States to consider this proposal in the near future.