

**Statement as delivered by the United States  
at the Tenth Ministerial Plenary of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)  
25 September 2019**

Thank you Foreign Ministers Bourita and Blok for hosting this important meeting today. I also wish to thank the other ministers and senior officials who have joined us this morning. We appreciate you being here.

As we all know, the terrorist landscape continues to evolve and present us with new and complex challenges. The GCTF has always been at the forefront of countering evolving terrorist threats. Today, many of these threats center on significant evolutions in technology, such as terrorist use of unmanned aerial systems, or UAS, and encrypted applications.

As part of our shared efforts to counter these threats, I am pleased to present for endorsement today the Berlin Memorandum on Good Practices for Countering Terrorist Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems. This document highlights the threat posed by terrorist use of UAS against civilian targets and presents the policy, legal, and technical tools required to mitigate it.

Another pressing challenge is that of foreign terrorist fighters, or FTFs.

With the fall of ISIS's physical caliphate in Iraq and Syria, there are now over 2,000 FTFs who have been captured by Coalition partners. Other FTFs who remain at large are now traveling to their countries of origin or other locations, presenting threats to our respective homelands.

We also face the challenge of what happens to FTF families who once lived under the ISIS caliphate. Today, there are more than 70,000 people at the al-Hol camp alone.

Our collective goal must be to prevent these fighters and their families from ever returning to terrorism. The most effective way to do that is to repatriate them from Syria, prosecute those who have committed crimes, and rehabilitate and reintegrate those who have been exposed to ISIS's toxic ideology. That is what the United States has been doing for our citizens, and President Trump has called on other nations to do the same. I renew that call today.

As co-chairs of the FTF Working Group, the United States and Jordan have prioritized addressing terrorist travel, the challenges of returning FTFs and families, building stronger watchlists and other tools, and increasing information sharing. I am therefore pleased to present for endorsement the New York Memorandum on Good Practices for Interdicting Terrorist Travel.

The United States and Morocco led the development of the New York Memorandum in an effort to assist countries in implementing their obligations under UNSCR 2396, which calls for combatting the travel of FTFs and other terrorists.

We believe the resulting good practices will help countries understand how to build effective terrorist screening systems and watchlists, including using and sharing Advanced Passenger Information, Passenger Name Records, and biometric data – all required by UNSCR 2396.

I am also pleased to announce today two new GCTF initiatives the United States, under the auspices of the FTF Working Group, will undertake to push the New York Memorandum's good practices forward.

First, developing an international "Watchlisting Guidance Manual" will pool our collective knowledge of how to create and maintain a watchlist of known and suspected terrorists, or KSTs. The resulting document will serve as a toolkit for nations to develop their own country-specific watchlisting guidance.

It will also assist countries in building an integrated whole-of-government approach to managing a watchlisting and known or suspected terrorist screening enterprise, while observing all appropriate legal safeguards.

Second, efforts to increase the use of watchlists, biometrics, and traveler data for border screening thus far have focused primarily on air and land ports of entry. In many locations, the maritime sector serves as a primary mode of travel and transport.

The United States is pleased to lead an initiative on "Maritime Security and Terrorist Travel" to raise awareness of trends in current and potential terrorist exploitation of the maritime sector for travel, and how we can take collective action to counter this threat.

We are here today because terrorism remains a significant threat to all of us. Cooperation through platforms such as the GCTF is critical to staying ahead of evolving terrorist threats and challenges.

We must remain vigilant, nimble, and collaborative. We look forward to continuing our work to share good practices and mobilize resources to build global counterterrorism partnerships and capacity. Thank you.