Evaluation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)

21 May 2025

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OIOS
Office of Internal Oversight Services

INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

Function

"The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization;" (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B).

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Summary

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluated the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). The evaluation covered the period 2020 to 2024.

UNOCT activities were aligned with its mandate and the 2006 United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (UNGCTS). Its activities were also highly relevant to its five main functions. However, there was an imbalance in UNOCT approach to mandate implementation, with an overemphasis on its own delivery of capacity building rather than coordination of such assistance by the United Nations system entities.

UNOCT interventions contributed to increased awareness and strengthened capacities of the Member States it supported. Although effectiveness varied across the five functions, UNOCT interventions contributed to the UNGCTS implementation at both global and regional levels and strengthening capacities in the evaluation's five case study countries of Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, Philippines and Uzbekistan. Government officials and other external stakeholders widely appreciated the support they received through UNOCT capacity building activities, although members of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (the Compact) were critical of the effectiveness of such activities. Additionally, sustainability of UNOCT contributions to capacity building results was mixed.

UNOCT contributed to strengthening of United Nations system-wide collaboration on counter-terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism (CT/PCVE) and built networks among country-level officials working on related issues, although several factors limited achievement of an all-of-United Nations approach to implementing the UNGCTS. One of these factors was the UNOCT dual roles in coordination and capacity building, the latter of which overlapped with the mandates of other Compact entities, thus limiting operational level coordination and undermining trust among some Compact members. UNOCT largely integrated gender and human rights into its activities although its contribution to their enhanced integration in the CT/PCVE efforts of Member States remained limited.

Furthermore, several inefficiencies impeded UNOCT effectiveness and internal coherence. These included challenges with organizational structure, clarity of roles and responsibilities, availability of resources, administrative support, internal coherence and field support arrangements. These had significant negative effect on the achievement of an integrated and intended whole-of-entity approach to mandate delivery.

OIOS makes five important recommendations to UNOCT to:

i) revise Strategic Plan and Results Framework;

ii) strengthen system-wide collaboration and coherence on CT/PCVE;

iii) enhance engagement with civil society, regional organizations, United Nations country teams and peace operations on CT/PCVE;

iv) reform organizational structure; and

v) develop a field presence strategy.

I. Introduction and objective

1.   The objective of this Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluation was to assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of the United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (UNOCT). The evaluation was conducted in conformity with the norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations System.[1]
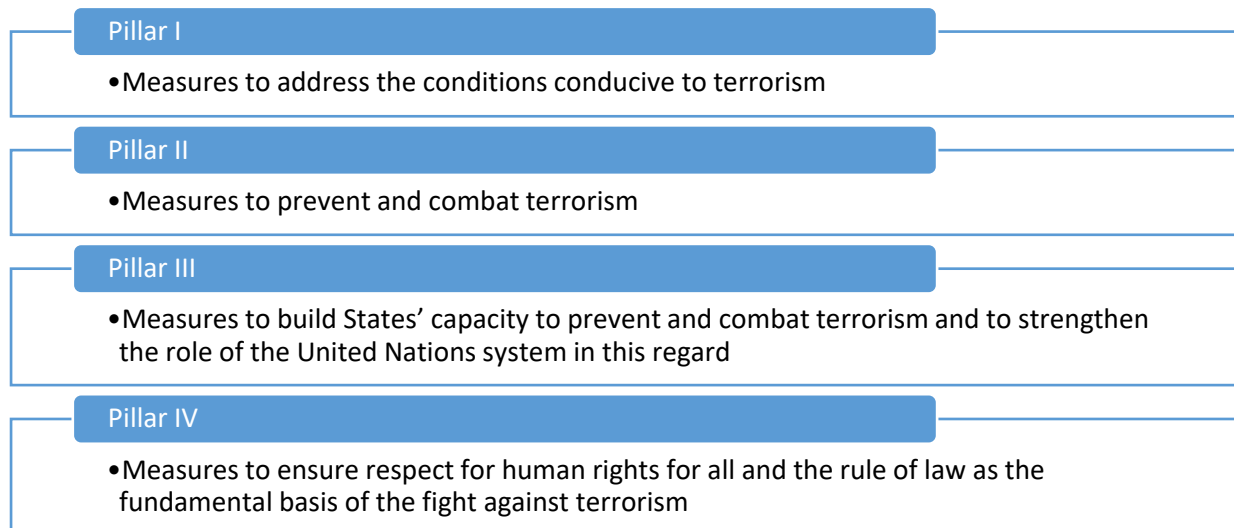
2.   UNOCT management response on the draft report is included in Annex I. OIOS wishes to acknowledge and thank the evaluation focal points who assisted with the conduct of the evaluation.

II. Background

Mandate and objectives

3.   UNOCT was established in 2017 by the General Assembly in resolution 71/291. In accordance with the competencies and functions proposed by the Secretary-General in the report A/71/858, UNOCT incorporated the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) Office and the United Nations Counter Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) from the then Department of Political Affairs.

4.   UNOCT was created to strengthen the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in their implementation of the 2006 United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (hereafter referred to as the UNGCTS or the Strategy)[2] and its successive review resolutions. The UNOCT mandate was derived from the goals and actions outlined across the four pillars of the UNGCTS listed below and reaffirmed through regular reviews of the Strategy by the General Assembly, most recently in the eighth review in resolution 77/298. The four pillars of the UNGCTS are:

Pillar I
- Measures to address the conditions conducive to terrorism

Pillar II
- Measures to prevent and combat terrorism

Pillar III
- Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard

Pillar IV
- Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism

5.   The objective of UNOCT is to support Member States to prevent and counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, in compliance with international law.[3] UNOCT is responsible for the following five main functions:[4]

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[1] https://www.unevaluation.org/uneg_publications/uneg-norms-and-standards-evaluation-un-system
[2] A/RES/60/288 (2006).
[3] A/78/6 (Section 3), page 114.
[4] A/71/858, para 64.

(i)	**Leadership**: providing leadership on the General Assembly counter-terrorism mandates entrusted to the Secretary-General from across the United Nations system;
(ii)	**Coordination and coherence**: enhancing coordination and coherence across the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to ensure the balanced implementation of the four pillars of the Strategy;
(iii)	**Capacity building**: strengthening the delivery of the United Nations counter-terrorism capacity building assistance to Member States;
(iv)	**Visibility and advocacy**: improving the visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for the United Nations counter-terrorism efforts; and
(v)	**Due priority**: ensuring that due priority is given to counter-terrorism across the United Nations system and that the important work on preventing violent extremism is firmly rooted in the Strategy.

6.   UNOCT used a range of modalities in undertaking the above functions focusing on counter-terrorism (CT) and preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) issues, including:

    a.   supporting Member States' deliberations;

    b.   organizing conferences, meetings and seminars;

    c.   coordinating across system-wide entities;

    d.   implementing capacity building projects, training and workshops;

    e.   producing knowledge products; and

    f.   raising awareness and conducting advocacy.

7.   The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact (the Compact) was established in 2018 to foster an "all-of-United Nations" approach to supporting Member States with the UNGCTS implementation. The Compact was comprised of 38 members and eight observer entities working on CT/PCVE as of April 2025. UNOCT serves as the secretariat of the Compact.

Strategy, governance, structure and resources

8.   The work of UNOCT is guided by its Strategic Plan and Results Framework (SPRF), which outlined five strategic goals around its main functions and identified the following six institutional priorities:

(i)	an internal results culture;
(ii)	fit-for-purpose internal structure and staffing;
(iii)	field-based orientation to be closer to UNOCT partners and activities at the country and regional levels;
(iv)	enhanced engagement with stakeholders;
(v)	amplified human rights and gender mainstreaming; and
(vi)	sustainable and diversified funding.

9.   As a Secretariat entity, UNOCT is subject to the prevailing governance mechanism and processes of the Secretariat. In 2012, the Secretary-General established an Advisory Board for the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), consisting of 20 Member States and the European Union (EU) as guest member, which has been chaired by Saudi Arabia, to provide guidance on UNCCT work. UNOCT also organized quarterly briefings on its work with Member States.

10.   UNOCT is headed by the Under-Secretary-General (USG) for Counter-Terrorism, supported by a Deputy to the USG, and a total of 197 posts. With its headquarters in New York, UNOCT operated seven programme offices and maintained presences in ten countries across multiple regions.

11.   The UNOCT annual average budget during 2020-2024 was USD 56 million, with slight decrease in extrabudgetary resources in 2024. The share of regular budget in UNOCT increased from four per cent in 2020 to 23 per cent in 2024 due to the conversion of 49 posts to regular budget during 2023-2024. UNOCT predominantly relies on extrabudgetary contributions from its funding partners. Since the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Counter-Terrorism in 2009, the top funding partners are Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the European Union along with 42 other contributors.

III.   Scope and Methodology

12.   The evaluation covered the whole of UNOCT and the 2020-2024 period. It used a mixed-method approach incorporating the following data sources:
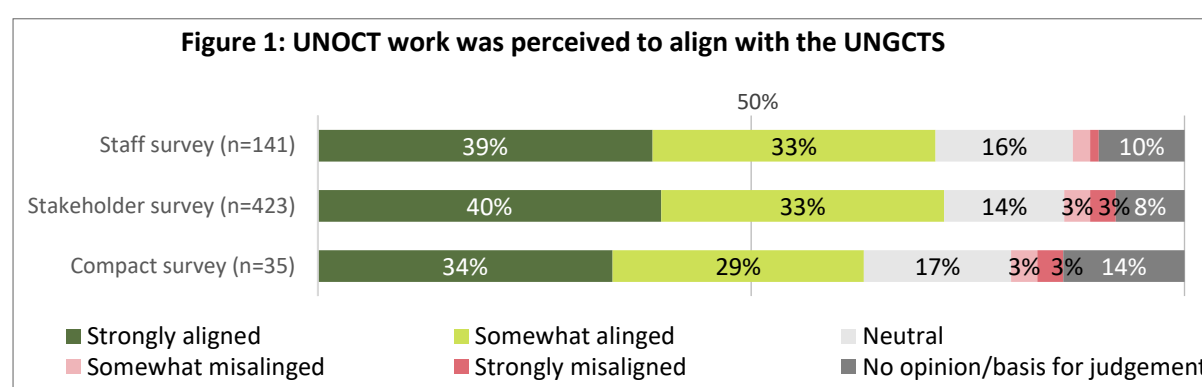
Document review	Review of key documents: programme budgets, project document and workplans, performance and donor reports, evaluation and other oversight reports, intergovernmental proceedings, reports and resolutions, including other UN and external materials.
Secondary data analysis	Analysis of data from: UNOCT App (data on projects and activities), UMOJA (project, finance and monitoring data) and CTED recommendations dashboard (Member States' technical assistance needs). External sources included the Global Terrorism Index (2020-2024) on terrorism impact and global trends, and Janes database on terrorism and insurgency data, group profiles, country briefings and reports.
Interviews with UNOCT staff and external stakeholders	160 interviews with HQ- and field-based UNOCT and other Compact entity staff, government officials, representatives of Permanent Missions, donors, regional organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), implementing partners and youth groups. Majority of interviewees (78 per cent) were external to UNOCT, 53 per cent were external to the UN system and 39 per cent were women.
UNOCT personnel survey	143 total responses representing a 79 per cent response rate. Fifty-six per cent of respondents were women. The online survey was sent to 182 individuals.
External stakeholders survey	517 responses representing a 32 per cent response rate. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents were women. Responses were received from 104 countres and the online survey was shared with 1615 individuals in Arabic, English, French and Russian.
Compact survey	38 responses from 25 Compact entities representing response rates of 53 per cent at the individual level and 54 per cent at the entity level. Half of the respondents were women. The online survey was sent to 72 individuals from 46 entities.
Five country case studies	Case studies of Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, Philippines (virtual) and Uzbekistan, which were selected based on the following criteria: (i) the extent of impact of terrorism; (ii) number of UNOCT projects; (iii) presence of a national strategy or plan of action for UNGCTS implementation; and (iv) geographic balance. Except for the Philippines, field visits were conducted to the other four countries.
Direct observation	- UNOCT staff induction workshop - Quarterly briefing to Member States - High-Level Briefing on the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returnees - UNOCT briefing to the Security Council on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh).

IV. Evaluation Results

A.   While UNOCT aligned its activities with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (UNGCTS) and its mandate, UNOCT's emphasis on capacity building did not fully reflect its comparative advantages

UNOCT activities were fully guided by the UNGCTS and highly relevant to its mandate
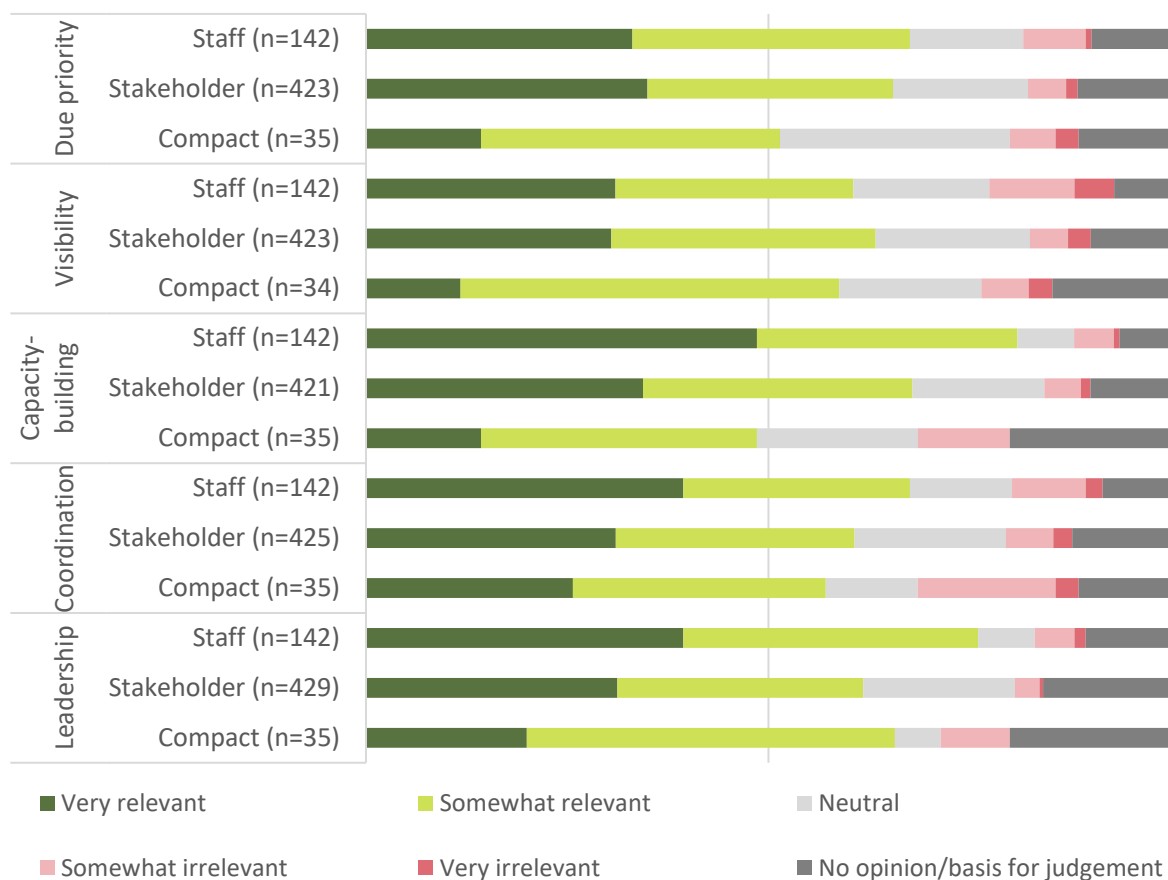
13.   The activities of UNOCT had strong relevance to the UNGCTS. Most of all interviewees positively assessed the alignment of UNOCT work with the UNGCTS, and survey respondents agreed, as shown in Figure 1. UNOCT had internal systems in place to vet and track projects and activities against the four pillars of the UNGCTS, and staff interviewed consistently emphasized the UNGCTS as the foundation for all UNOCT activities, providing them with the flexibility to encompass a broad range of issues.

Figure 1: UNOCT work was perceived to align with the UNGCTS

	Strongly aligned	Somewhat alinged	Neutral	Somewhat misalinged	Strongly misaligned	No opinion/basis for judgement
Staff survey (n=141)	39%	33%	16%			10%
Stakeholder survey (n=423)	40%	33%	14%	3%	3%	8%
Compact survey (n=35)	34%	29%	17%	3%	3%	14%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

14.   A structured review of UNOCT activities conducted as part of this evaluation showed that they were generally aligned with and highly relevant to the five main Office functions outlined in para 5 above. Most respondents across the three surveys also assessed UNOCT activities to be relevant to the five functions, although Compact members rated capacity building as less relevant than the other four functions, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: UNOCT activities were perceived as being highly relevant to its five functions

Due priority	Staff (n=142)
	Stakeholder (n=423)
	Compact (n=35)
Visibility	Staff (n=142)
	Stakeholder (n=423)
	Compact (n=34)
Capacity-building	Staff (n=142)
	Stakeholder (n=421)
	Compact (n=35)
Coordination	Staff (n=142)
	Stakeholder (n=425)
	Compact (n=35)
Leadership	Staff (n=142)
	Stakeholder (n=429)
	Compact (n=35)

■ Very relevant   ■ Somewhat relevant   ■ Neutral
■ Somewhat irrelevant   ■ Very irrelevant   ■ No opinion/basis for judgement

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

UNOCT focus across its five main functions was not balanced

15.   Despite the positive assessment of relevance between UNOCT activities and functions, there was an imbalance in its approach to mandate implementation, with greater emphasis on its own delivery of capacity building assistance rather than coordination of such assistance by other United Nations system entities. Furthermore, despite a strong emphasis by Member States on the balanced implementation of all four UNGCTS pillars,[5] UNOCT efforts were more directed towards capacity building projects which primarily focused on Pillars II (prevent and combat terrorism) and III (capacity building). This focus on capacity building was mainly driven by the heavy reliance of UNOCT on extrabudgetary project funding and demand from Member States. With over two-thirds of its operational budget and nearly the same proportion of staff involved in capacity building activities across all five of its substantive organizational units, UNOCT efforts were not balanced across its five main functions. Staff surveyed also reported higher concentration of their efforts on pillars II and III with 65 per cent of staff reporting at least a half of their work focused on these two pillars combined, and in interviews they most frequently referred to capacity building when citing UNOCT contributions.

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[5] The UNGCTS 8th review resolution 77/298 mentioned the need for a balanced implementation of the pillars eight times.

16.   Survey respondents and interviewees identified the following top five comparative advantages of UNOCT:
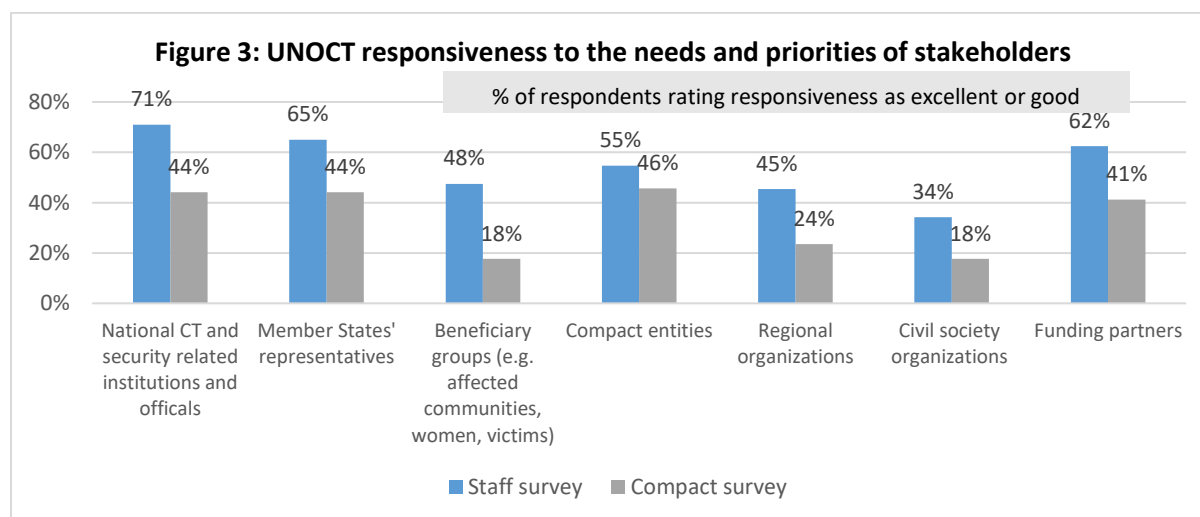
> i)   Focused and specialized mandate on CT/PCVE;
> ii) Professional and technical expertise of staff;
> iii) Convening power to build consensus on norms and agreements on CT/PCVE;
> iv) Leadership on system-wide CT/PCVE efforts; and
> v)   Strong Member State support for mandate, including access to national CT/PCVE counterparts.

17.   These UNOCT comparative advantages were well-aligned with all its five main functions. However, these advantages were not fully reflected in the work of the office; interviewed stakeholders, including Member States representatives, noted the significant focus of UNOCT on capacity building did not harness the opportunities for UNOCT to achieve further results in its other functions. While the capacity building focus responded to Member States' requests, it also created the perception among stakeholders interviewed that other dimensions of the broader UNGCTS strategic goals received comparatively less visibility, resourcing and institutional attention.

B.   UNOCT adequately responded to Member States' requests for support, but dwindling funding and insufficient strategic resource allocation impeded its overall responsiveness to CT/PCVE risks
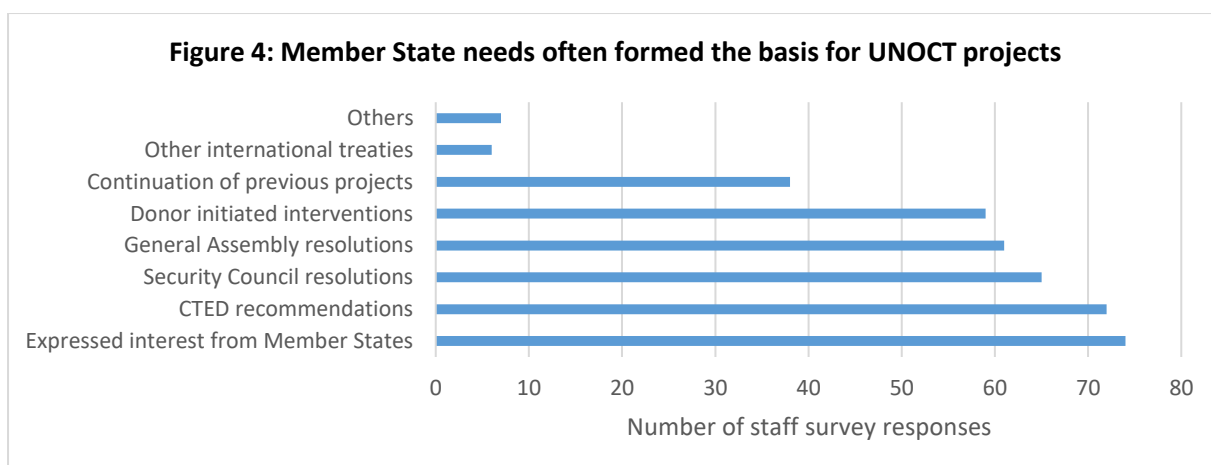
UNOCT responded well to the needs and priorities of Member States and other stakeholders

18.   The majority of all staff and stakeholders surveyed and interviewed, including over two-thirds of surveyed government officials and donors, positively assessed UNOCT responsiveness to the needs and priorities of Member States and other stakeholders such as beneficiary groups, funding partners and Compact entities. However, staff and Compact survey respondents differed significantly in their assessment of UNOCT responsiveness, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: UNOCT responsiveness to the needs and priorities of stakeholders

% of respondents rating responsiveness as excellent or good

	Staff survey	Compact survey
National CT and security related institutions and officals	71%	44%
Member States' representatives	65%	44%
Beneficiary groups (e.g. affected communities, women, victims)	48%	18%
Compact entities	55%	46%
Regional organizations	45%	24%
Civil society organizations	34%	18%
Funding partners	62%	41%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff and Compact members

19.   UNOCT was the most responsive to the Member States it supported, as reflected in the staff survey that identified Member State interests as the main basis for UNOCT projects, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Member State needs often formed the basis for UNOCT projects

Source: OIOS survey of staff

UNOCT overall responsiveness to CT/PCVE risks was limited by the dwindling extrabudgetary funding and the lack of a field presence strategy

20.   As discussed in paragraph 11, UNOCT relied heavily on voluntary contributions from its funding partners, especially for capacity building activities. This contributed to a perception that the influence of funding partners' priorities on UNOCT projects was a key factor affecting UNOCT responsiveness in the field. UNOCT noted this challenge to be reflective of a broader trend of declining extrabudgetary funding environment across the United Nations system. This reliance on donor-driven models, coupled with the conclusion of unearmarked contributions from Saudi Arabia and a general decline in donor resources, presented challenges to UNOCT capacity to effectively meet the growing demand for CT/PCVE support. For example, extrabudgetary resources in 2024 dropped by over 12 per cent to $46 million compared to an annual average of $52.5 million during the 2021-2023 period. Uncertainty with donor fund disbursements also affected programme delivery. For example, an eight-month delay in fund disbursements by a top funding partner in 2024 left UNOCT with four months to execute a year's worth of budget, resulting in precarious staff contracts and the focus shifting from substantive delivery to securing jobs and funding.

21.   Furthermore, insufficient field presence and limitations in project management and local engagement capacity affected UNOCT responsiveness at the field level. The lack of a finalized field strategy, which was discussed but not completed, and the lack of regular budget resources to deploy away from Headquarters contributed to the perceptions that field office locations were influenced by political considerations and funding opportunities rather than a coherent strategic framework. UNOCT noted that it had clear internal procedures and specifications governing the establishment of field presences and that its expansion of such presences aimed to bring delivery closer to beneficiaries, with most field presences supporting Member States located primarily in Africa and Central Asia.

22.   Interviewees across all groups referenced to a perception of UNOCT requiring financial contributions as a condition for support, with additional concerns over lack of a finalized field strategy, and funding arrangements driving the decisions around office locations and programmes.[6] While stakeholders in all five case study countries highly valued UNOCT assistance, the lack of clear country-level engagement strategies and action plans led to inconsistencies in UNOCT responses and unmet expectations from stakeholders. Figure 5 demonstrates the aggregate case study analyses based on all stakeholder interviews.

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[6] Five of seven UNOCT programme offices were in donor countries and talks for more such offices were underway, with limited presence in beneficiary countries.

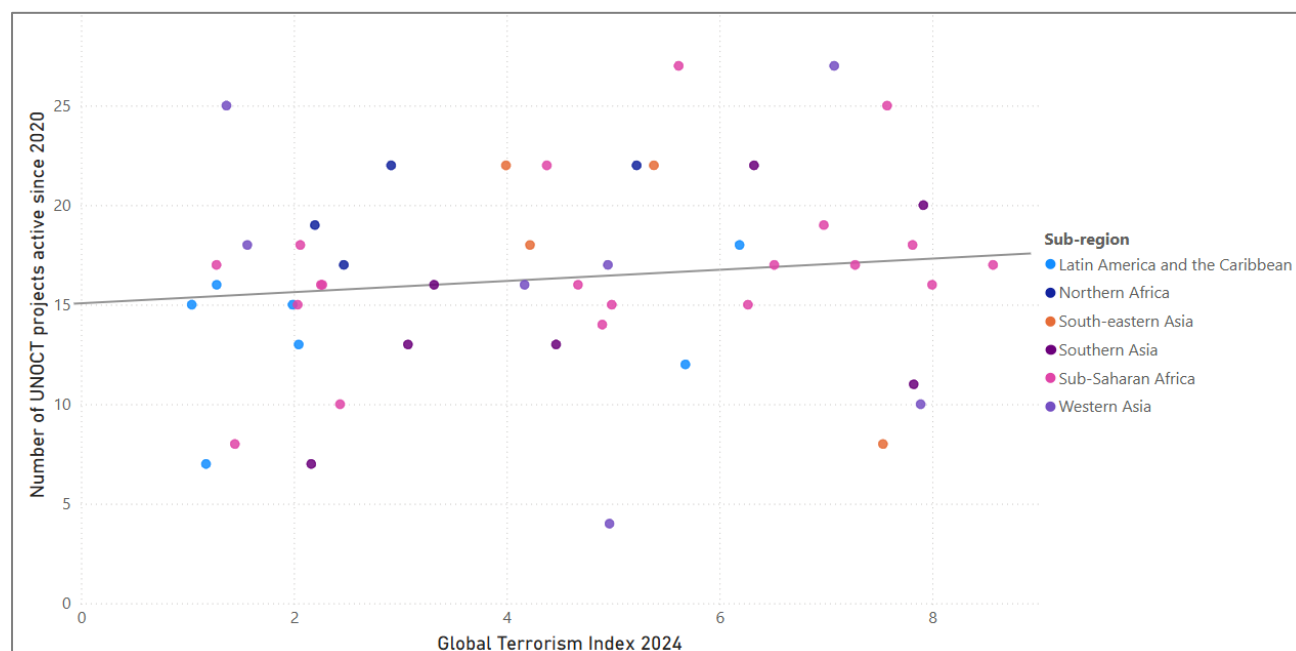**Figure 5: UNOCT activities were highly relevant, but responsiveness varied in case study countries**

Case study country	Relevance	Responsiveness
Iraq	Very high	Very low
Kenya	Very high	High
Nigeria	Very high	Low
Philippines	Very high	Neutral
Uzbekistan	Very high	Very high

Source: OIOS analysis of case study interviews

Lack of strategic resource allocation also limited UNOCT responsiveness

23.   Additionally, while UNOCT supported all Member States and prioritized interventions in the Africa region, which faced high terrorism impact with over half of global terrorism fatalities in 2024,[7] there was a mismatch between UNOCT country-level projects and the severity of terrorism impact. As shown in Figure 6, the number of country-level UNOCT project activities (vertical axis) did not sufficiently correspond to the terrorism index score in the horizontal axis. This was due to factors including funding partners' priorities, lack of awareness about UNOCT support and capacity gaps. Also, the way UNOCT tracked and defined supported Member States, such as counting individual training participants as countries served, inaccurately represented the reach of its projects. This was part of a broader weakness in results monitoring and reporting (discussed in result E below).

Figure 6: Distribution of country-level UNOCT projects (2020-2024) and the global terrorism index (2024) scores showed lack of alignment

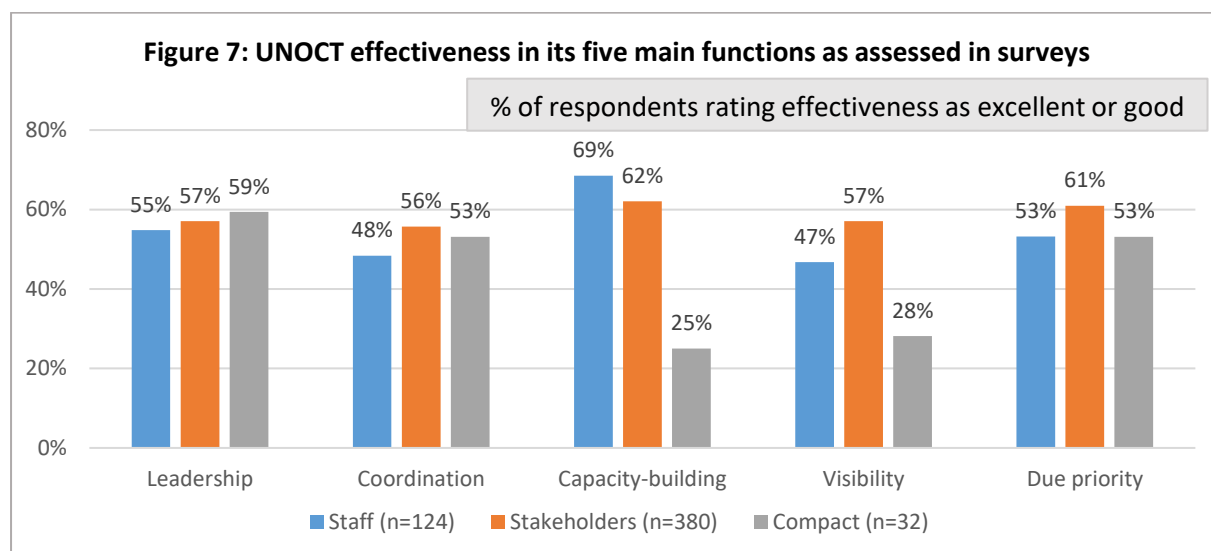Note: Developed countries and those with zero index values were omitted.
Source(s): OIOS analysis of UNOCT projects and Global Terrorism Index (2024) data available at https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/GTI-2024-web-290224.pdf.

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[7] Global Terrorism Index.

C. UNOCT modalities contributed to the UNGCTS implementation, including through increased awareness and strengthened capacities of the Member States it supported

UNOCT significantly contributed to UNGCTS implementation at both global and regional levels

24.   A majority of survey respondents, with the exception of Compact survey respondents, rated UNOCT's effectiveness positively across its five main functions. Generally, over half of surveyed staff and stakeholders had positive assessments of effectiveness in the five areas, with capacity building being rated as most effective by staff and stakeholders but least effective by Compact respondents, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: UNOCT effectiveness in its five main functions as assessed in surveys

% of respondents rating effectiveness as excellent or good

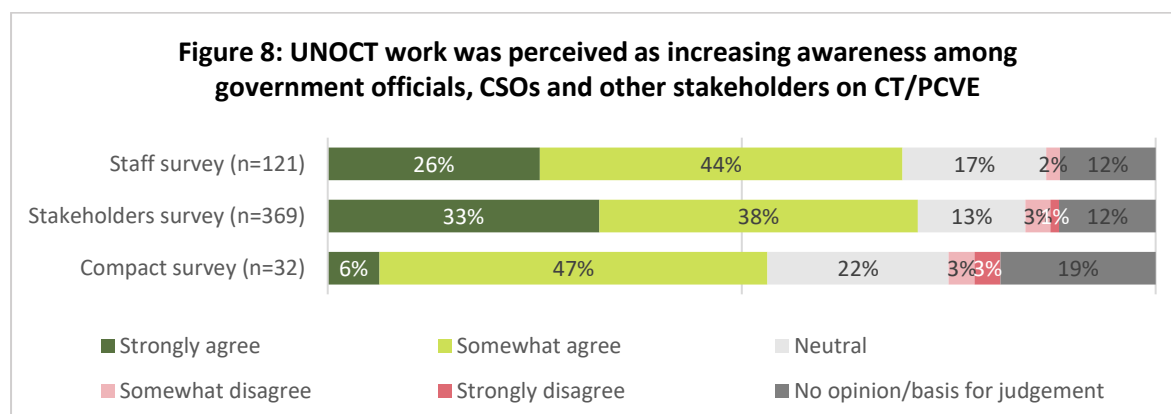|	Leadership	Coordination	Capacity-building	Visibility	Due priority
Staff (n=124)	55%	48%	69%	47%	53%
Stakeholders (n=380)	57%	56%	62%	57%	61%
Compact (n=32)	59%	53%	25%	28%	53%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

25.   Notwithstanding the varying assessments provided by survey respondents, UNOCT made important contributions, as evident from data obtained from interviews, surveys, case study analysis, and documents, at both global and regional levels, to:

(i)   increased awareness on CT/PCVE;

(ii)   enhanced advocacy and consensus for UNGCTS implementation;

(iii)   strengthened Member State capacities, including in all five case study countries; and

(iv)   increased United Nations system-wide coordination (which will be discussed in result C below).

26.   Regarding increased awareness on CT/PCVE issues, UNOCT organized CT Week, high-level and regional conferences (such as on victims of terrorism, foreign terrorist fighters) and thematic events that brought together diverse groups of policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders (including international and regional organizations, parliamentarians, youth groups, CSOs, academia). For example, stakeholders interviewed and surveyed highlighted the CT Week, which includes the United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of CT Agencies of Member States organized by UNOCT since 2018 often coinciding with the General Assembly's review of the Strategy, as a key platform for discussing global counter-terrorism priorities and fostering international collaboration. Several other events which UNOCT organized, for example the Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration or PRR, and the High-Level Conference on Strengthening International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Building Agile Border Security Mechanisms–the Kuwait Phase of the Dushanbe Process, have also raised awareness and promoted collective efforts. UNOCT communication and outreach efforts also
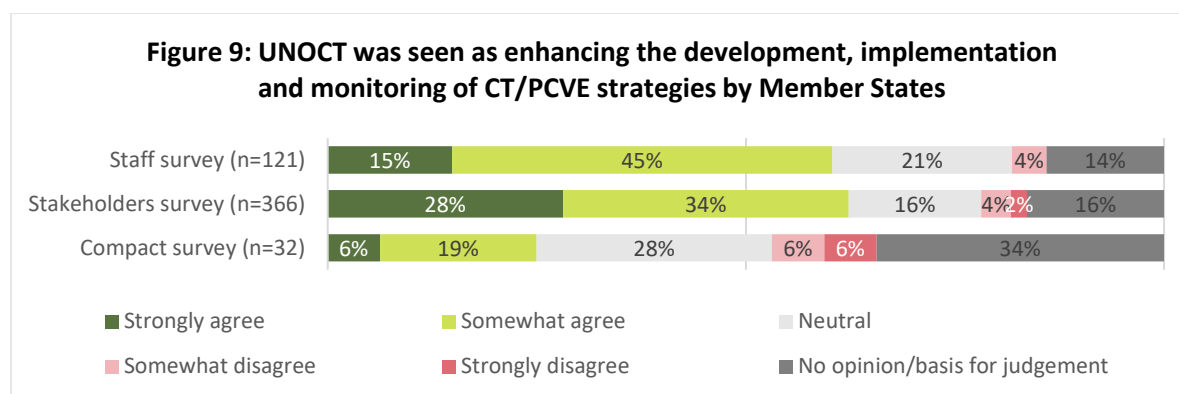
helped build awareness among government officials, CSOs and other stakeholders on CT/PCVE, as evidenced by the majority of stakeholders survey respondents positively assessing UNOCT contributions in this area, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: UNOCT work was perceived as increasing awareness among government officials, CSOs and other stakeholders on CT/PCVE

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/basis for judgement
Staff survey (n=121)	26%	44%	17%	2%		12%
Stakeholders survey (n=369)	33%	38%	13%	3%	1%	12%
Compact survey (n=32)	6%	47%	22%	3%	3%	19%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

27. With regard to enhanced visibility and advocacy and consensus for UNGCTS implementation, UNOCT supported and facilitated the deliberation and review of the UNGCTS by Member States, securing their unanimous support. UNOCT senior leadership also routinely engaged in dialogue with national counterparts and other international and regional organizations to promote and advocate for the CT/PCVE agenda. Regional and thematic efforts, such as the Abuja process to establish a counter-terrorism center in Western Africa, and the Kuwait Declaration on Border Security and Management that serves as a guiding document for future cooperation and capacity building on border security, also supported advocacy, regional and sub-regional collaboration and agenda setting. UNOCT knowledge products supported the dissemination of information, tracking of trends as well as facilitated collaboration among Compact entities and Member States. For example, interviewed Compact entity representatives appreciated the UNOCT dashboard on Member States' technical assistance needs identified by CTED as a facilitating factor for collective capacity building efforts. Additionally, UNOCT led the development of the Global Framework for PRR, and as part of the Al-Hol task force aimed at repatriating foreign terrorist fighters and their families detained in Syria, created a repository on repatriation data, national policy positions and laws to enhance the system-wide repatriation support globally.

28. The increased awareness and enhanced visibility and consensus helped translate the UNGCTS implementation at the regional and national levels. While 62 per cent of all stakeholder survey respondents positively assessed UNOCT contributions in translating the UNGCTS into regional and national CT/PCVE strategies, only 25 per cent of Compact survey respondents did so, as shown in Figure 9. For example, UNOCT programme supporting the five Central Asian countries in implementing the UNGCTS in the region resulted in the development of a regional approach and country-level strategies. Similarly, a majority of staff (57 per cent) and stakeholders (55 per cent) surveyed agreed that UNOCT enhanced Member States' capacities (in terms of officials, institutions, policies and strategies) for UNGCTS implementation.

Figure 9: UNOCT was seen as enhancing the development, implementation and monitoring of CT/PCVE strategies by Member States

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/basis for judgement
Staff survey (n=121)	15%	45%	21%	4%		14%
Stakeholders survey (n=366)	28%	34%	16%	4%	2%	16%
Compact survey (n=32)	6%	19%	28%	6%	6%	34%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

29.   With reference to strengthened Member State capacities, UNOCT implemented 57 capacity building programmes and projects with nearly USD 76 million budget during 2020-2024. This included training for thousands of officials from National Counter-Terrorism Centers (NCTCs) and related security institutions, support to the development and implementation of CT/PCVE strategies and action plans, strategic communication, and technical assistance on critical and emerging thematic areas. Through its award winning Connect and Learn platform,[8] UNOCT hosted more than 50 e-learning courses that enhanced national officials' awareness, skills and collaboration. For example, courses available on the platform supported: NGO officials to integrate PCVE-focused methodologies in Jordan; institutionalized e-learning on human rights and CT in Uzbekistan; and facilitated peer exchanges on the critical infrastructure protection and cybersecurity legislation in Australia.

30.   The provision of technical assistance to Member States was also part of UNOCT capacity building efforts, and stakeholders and beneficiaries interviewed and surveyed noted several good examples of this, including:

(i)   the UNOCT-led multiagency programme on countering terrorist travel which worked with over 80 countries to strengthen capacities to detect and prevent terrorist travel in support of three Security Council resolutions;[9]

(ii)   the Fusion Cells programme supporting national intelligence analytical capabilities in 32 countries;

(iii)   global PCVE programme supporting youth engagement, strategic and crisis communication and monitoring and evaluation of PCVE strategies;

(iv)   victims of terrorism programme addressing the rights and needs of victims and survivors of terrorism through policy development, advocacy and outreach, technical assistance and communications;

(v)   the Global Programme on Detecting, Preventing and Countering the Financing of Terrorism that led to use of strategic analysis in detection and investigation of crypto assets used in financing of terrorism in Uzbekistan;

(vi)   PRR in Iraq and Central Asia supporting the return of foreign terrorist fighters and their family members from Syria; and
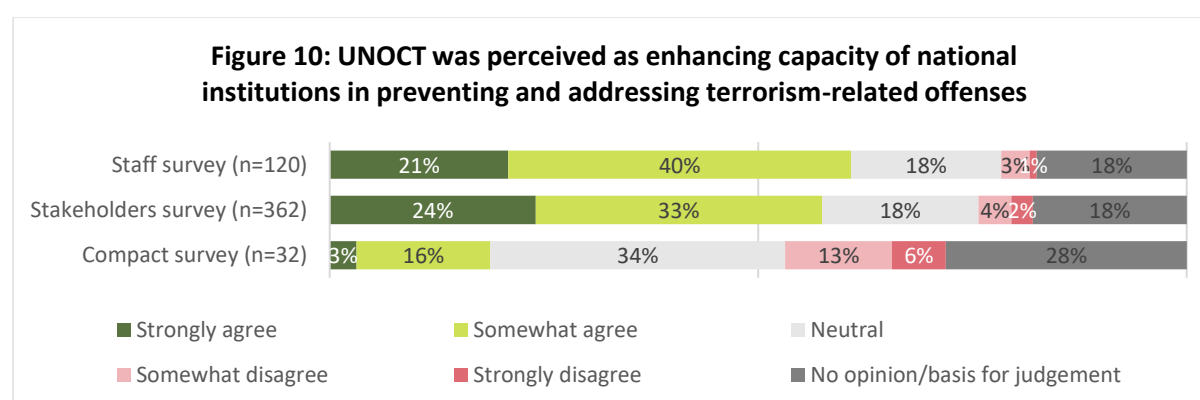
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[8] Won Gold Award in the Learning Platform of the Year category at the 2024 Learning Awards by the Learning and Performance Institute (LPI).
[9] Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2396 (2017) and 2482 (2019).

(vii)   the EU-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility, which provided tailored support to nine countries in addressing CTED recommendations.

UNOCT capacity building contributions were positively assessed by staff and stakeholders, although the Compact entities were more critical

31.   Staff and stakeholder feedback on UNOCT capacity building was generally positive. As already presented in Figure 7 above, the majority of staff and stakeholders surveyed rated overall UNOCT capacity building assistance to be effective, and those interviewed also largely assessed UNOCT capacity building support positively, including NCTC officials in the case study countries who praised it as being tailor-made, cross-fertilizing, hands-on and useful. In addition, a majority of staff (55 per cent) and stakeholders (57 per cent) surveyed agreed that UNOCT supported the implementation of CT/PCVE initiatives by Member States. Moreover, they attributed the enhanced capacity of national institutions in the prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution and adjudication of terrorism-related offenses to UNOCT capacity building efforts, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: UNOCT was perceived as enhancing capacity of national institutions in preventing and addressing terrorism-related offenses

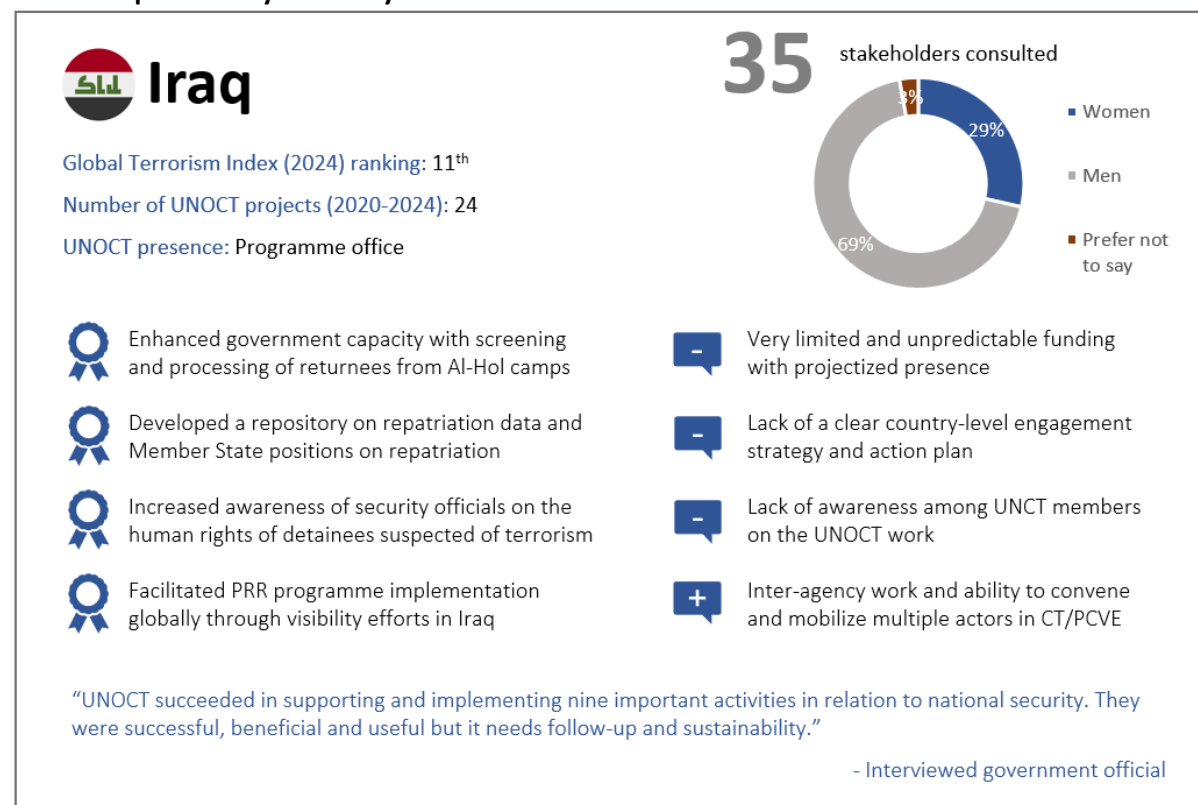|	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/basis for judgement
Staff survey (n=120)	21%	40%	18%	3%	1%	18%
Stakeholders survey (n=362)	24%	33%	18%	4%	2%	18%
Compact survey (n=32)	3%	16%	34%	13%	6%	28%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

32.   However, across all survey questions on capacity building effectiveness, only 29 per cent of Compact survey respondents rated UNOCT positively, and one-fourth (26 per cent) were unaware of UNOCT capacity building work. Several Compact representatives interviewed noted that UNOCT focused on donor priorities rather than strategic niche areas, thus detracting from its effectiveness.

UNOCT made notable contributions to strengthening capacities in the five case study countries

33.   Across the five case study countries, UNOCT was largely perceived as a trusted and valuable partner by NCTCs and other Government counterparts. Most government officials interviewed in the five countries were able to point to specific examples of strengthened capacities resulting from UNOCT efforts. Clear evidence of UNOCT results was observed in the five case studies despite very limited resources, which are discussed in Boxes 1 to 5 below.

Box 1: Iraq case study summary

Iraq

Global Terrorism Index (2024) ranking: 11th

Number of UNOCT projects (2020-2024): 24

UNOCT presence: Programme office

35 stakeholders consulted

- Women 29%
- Men 69%
- Prefer not to say

- Enhanced government capacity with screening and processing of returnees from Al-Hol camps
- Developed a repository on repatriation data and Member State positions on repatriation
- Increased awareness of security officials on the human rights of detainees suspected of terrorism
- Facilitated PRR programme implementation globally through visibility efforts in Iraq

- Very limited and unpredictable funding with projectized presence
- Lack of a clear country-level engagement strategy and action plan
- Lack of awareness among UNCT members on the UNOCT work
+ Inter-agency work and ability to convene and mobilize multiple actors in CT/PCVE

"UNOCT succeeded in supporting and implementing nine important activities in relation to national security. They were successful, beneficial and useful but it needs follow-up and sustainability."

- Interviewed government official

Box 2: Kenya case study summary

Kenya

Global Terrorism Index (2024) ranking: 18th

Number of UNOCT projects (2020-2024): 26

UNOCT presence: Programme office

48 stakeholders consulted

- Women 46%
- Men 54%

- Enhanced NCTC capacity to develop an M&E chapter and youth integration in PCVE strategy
- Supported NCTC in developing a communication strategy and a focus on leadership communication
- Supported Research Commission with legal gaps on cybersecurity to strengthen Data Protection Act
- Enhanced NCTC capacity on cognitive interviewing skills that led to successful information gathering

- Insufficient human and financial resources, operational presence and support from HQ
- Insufficient flow of information to some Compact entities on the ground
+ Very close relationship with NCTC and tailored response to their needs
+ Ability to convene and mobilize various stakeholders

"UNOCT [regional] presence in Nairobi gave Kenya a voice in CT/PCVE. Countries are able to benchmark and learn from us, [their regional presence built] partnerships."

- Interviewed NCTC official

Box 3: Nigeria case study summary
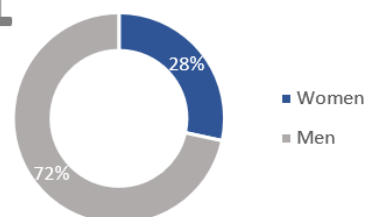
Nigeria

81 stakeholders consulted

- Women 28%
- Men 72%

Global Terrorism Index (2024) ranking: 8th

Number of UNOCT projects (2020-2024): 23

UNOCT presence: None

🏅 Facilitated the High-Level African CT Meeting in Abuja to establish a regional CT centre of excellence

🏅 Enhanced Civil Aviation Authority capacity to update the Civil Aviation Order and establish the API system

🏅 Enhanced individual capacities within NCTC on CT investigations

🏅 Enhanced youth engagement to work with NCTC on PCVE and establish regional peer networks

− No field presence and inconsistent engagement with counterparts in Nigeria

− Ineffective cooperation with UNCT entities and operations in the CT/PCVE space

+ High NCTC appreciation of UNOCT response to their CT/PCVE needs

"UNOCT facilitated training and workshops for Nigerian officials, focusing on best practices in CT strategies, legal frameworks, and human rights considerations. They helped build skills and knowledge for effective CT operations."

- Surveyed CSO official

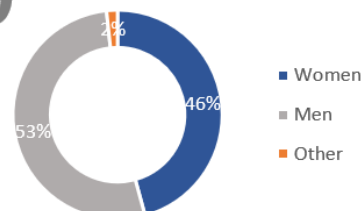**Box 4: Philippines case study summary**

Philippines

59 stakeholders consulted

- Women 46%
- Men 53%
- Other 2%

Global Terrorism Index (2024) ranking: 19th

Number of UNOCT projects (2020-2024): 21

UNOCT presence: Field presence

🏅 Facilitated operational readiness on the use of advanced passenger information

🏅 Enhanced national Human Rights Commission capacity for investigating anti-terrorism act cases

🏅 Facilitated a draft model legislation on the victims of terrorism

🏅 Improved messaging in the federal and local government approach to reintegration

− Inadequate human resources, HQ-support and lack of presence on the ground

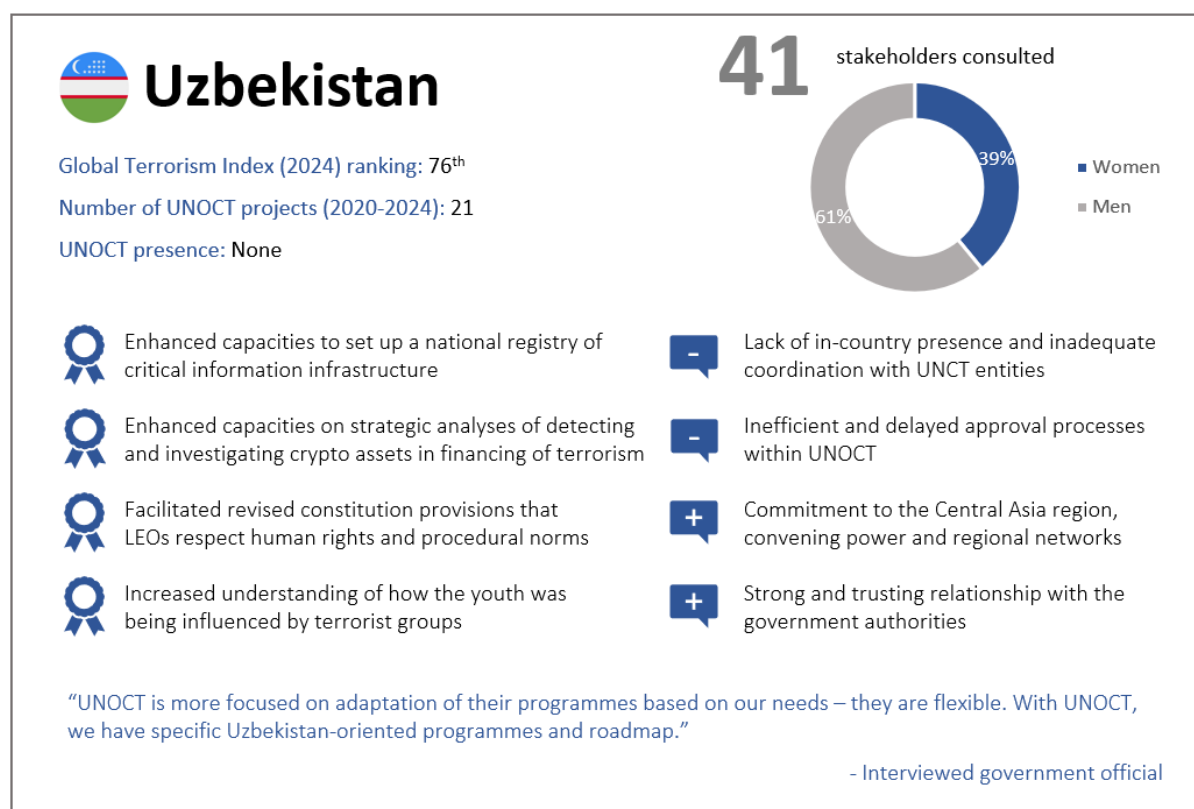− Delays with the Memorandum of Agreement

+ Inter-agency work and ability to convene and mobilize multiple actors in CT/PCVE

+ Ability to bring different perspectives and experiences from other Member States

"Through UNOCT, we were able to network with other government agencies. We were able to build relationships with them during regular meetings […] talk to them on their activities, update them, express our willingness to join them. Vital to our work."

- Interviewed government official

Box 5: Uzbekistan case study summary

🇺🇿 **Uzbekistan**

Global Terrorism Index (2024) ranking: 76th

Number of UNOCT projects (2020-2024): 21

UNOCT presence: None

41 stakeholders consulted

- Women 39%
- Men 61%

🏅 Enhanced capacities to set up a national registry of critical information infrastructure

🏅 Enhanced capacities on strategic analyses of detecting and investigating crypto assets in financing of terrorism

🏅 Facilitated revised constitution provisions that LEOs respect human rights and procedural norms

🏅 Increased understanding of how the youth was being influenced by terrorist groups

− Lack of in-country presence and inadequate coordination with UNCT entities

− Inefficient and delayed approval processes within UNOCT

+ Commitment to the Central Asia region, convening power and regional networks

+ Strong and trusting relationship with the government authorities

"UNOCT is more focused on adaptation of their programmes based on our needs – they are flexible. With UNOCT, we have specific Uzbekistan-oriented programmes and roadmap."

- Interviewed government official

The sustainability of enhanced capacity built through UNOCT contributions was mixed

34.   The results achieved through UNOCT contributions to capacity building were uneven with regard to sustainability. Just over half of staff (51 per cent) and majority of stakeholders (59 per cent) surveyed found UNOCT capacity building assistance to Member States to be sustainable. Key enabling factors for sustainable results included demand-driven support, linkages with national priorities, sufficient follow-up and scaled-up efforts. For example, interviewees highlighted the CT travel programme, which responded to requirements set out in the Security Council resolutions and produced sustainable results, and the EU-United Nations threats facility support, which responded to specific CTED recommendations and Member States requests. An additional example was the youth engagement and empowerment program in Kenya, where regular UNOCT follow-up contributed to the NCTC connecting youth participants with CSOs engaged in PCVE work, enhancing the project's sustainability.
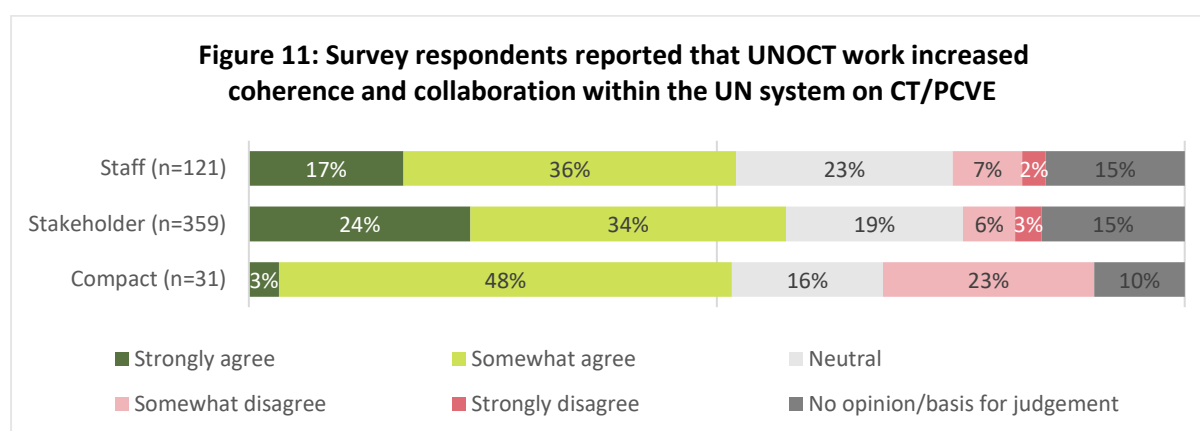
35.   While government officials in case study countries reported enhanced capacities from UNOCT training, stakeholders across those countries expressed concerns about the lack of a holistic, long-term approach impacting sustainability. Numerous officials, donors and implementing partners highlighted insufficient post-training engagement and inadequate monitoring and evaluation as hindering factors for sustainable results. Furthermore, the inability of UNOCT to consistently track training, workshops and other event participants negatively impacted its capacity to monitor and report on results and build upon its activities.

D. UNOCT contributed to strengthening the United Nations system-wide collaboration on CT/PCVE; however, several factors limited achievement of an all-of-United Nations approach to implementing the UNGCTS

UNOCT contributed to enhanced collaboration on CT/PCVE issues and built networks among stakeholders

36.   Strengthening coordination and coherence on CT/PCVE was central to the creation of UNOCT, a role further underscored by Member States when they supported its establishment in 2017, and in this role the office has had some success.[10] The importance of coordination was consistently highlighted by interviewees and survey respondents, who identified the convening power of UNOCT to build consensus on CT/PCVE norms and agreements as one of its top comparative advantages. UNOCT fulfilled its coordination mandate primarily at the Headquarters-level through its longstanding secretariat and leadership role in the Compact, supporting the efforts of 46 entities and showcasing system-wide work on CT/PCVE. Furthermore, UNOCT collaborated with other United Nations entities through various projects and events, including those highlighted above in all five case study countries. Moreover, 73 per cent of staff surveyed reported having collaborated with other Compact entities[11] in the design and implementation of activities. UNOCT policy coordination and advocacy efforts on behalf of the entire UN system also supported enhanced coherence of Compact entities' work.

37.   Feedback from survey respondents and interviewees on the effectiveness of UNOCT coordination efforts was generally positive, with variation between some groups. Across the three surveys, the majority of the respondents agreed that UNOCT work had increased system-wide coherence and collaboration on CT/PCVE, shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Survey respondents reported that UNOCT work increased coherence and collaboration within the UN system on CT/PCVE

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/basis for judgement
Staff (n=121)	17%	36%	23%	7%	2%	15%
Stakeholder (n=359)	24%	34%	19%	6%	3%	15%
Compact (n=31)	3%	48%	16%	23%		10%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

38.   About half of all staff and stakeholders interviewed shared positive assessments of UNOCT coherence with other United Nations entities, with notable differences across the case studies. While stakeholders in Uzbekistan and Kenya shared highly positive feedback, system-wide coherence in the other three countries was assessed as weak. Across the stakeholder groups, government officials interviewed shared the most positive assessments. Interviewees from other United Nations entities

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[10] This focus on coordination has roots in the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), established by the Secretary-General in 2005, which later became a core part of UNOCT. A significant majority (79 per cent) of Member States (26 out of 33) who provided written responses supporting the Secretary-General's proposal to establish UNOCT stressed the need for stronger coordination on CT/PCVE (A/71/858, para 71 and Annex I).
[11] Including with CTED, UNODC, UNDP, DCO, UNOPS, IOM, UN-Women, OHCHR and others.

appreciated UNOCT contributions in maintaining CT issues high on the agenda of Member States and considered its efforts in coordinating the 46 Compact entities as beneficial for all entities; however, they shared the least positive assessment on operational-level coherence among the entities.

39.   Furthermore, UNOCT coordination of CT/PCVE work was largely concentrated at the global level, and both staff and compact survey respondents rated UNOCT efforts for global-level coordination highly. Alignment with CTED was considered strong since CTED recommendations greatly informed UNOCT projects, and about two-thirds of staff rated collaboration with CTED positively. However, UNOCT support to coordinate CT/PCVE work at the field and in support of United Nations country teams, special political and peacekeeping missions was weak even though such support was identified as a key priority for UNCCT/UNOCT in 2014.[12]

40.   Beyond the United Nations system, UNOCT work created networks of Member States and other actors in support of the UNGCTS. For example, its Marrakech Platform provided a unique forum for the heads of counter-terrorism, intelligence and security agencies in Africa to identify needs and discuss and coordinate responses on new and emerging terrorism threats. Similar separate networks were established in other areas of the UNOCT work programme, such as working with victims of terrorism, engaging parliamentarians, PRR, CT Travel, as well as crisis and strategic communications. Government officials interviewed across the case study countries uniformly appreciated the professional networks built through UNOCT activities. Furthermore, 60 per cent of surveyed stakeholders shared a positive assessment that UNOCT work enhanced network of Member States and other actors.

Several factors inhibited achievement of an all-of-United Nations approach to UNGCTS implementation

41.   A number of factors contributed to a less comprehensive system-wide approach to UNGCTS implementation. First, UNOCT management of its dual roles both as a coordinator and a provider of capacity building created inherent conflicts of interest and undermined trust among some Compact members. This duality led to perceived mandate duplication and competition with other United Nations entities, especially with UNODC and CTED, resulting in inefficiencies and skepticism. Furthermore, operational-level coordination in the Compact was seen by some members and UNOCT staff as proforma and limited, characterized by superficial engagements rather than genuine collaboration focusing on high-level policy, strategic issues and partnerships. UNOCT interviewees also observed that some Compact members encroached on its mandated coordination role at times by leveraging their field presence and technical facilitation role, and questioned genuine interest among some Compact entities for coordination. Moreover, interviewed Compact members and UNOCT staff reported that Headquarters-level coordination through the Compact did not trickle down to the field. This contributed to a perception of UNOCT prioritizing its own visibility and relevance. Furthermore, there was no clear results framework for UNOCT coordination and collaboration work.

42.   An additional factor inhibiting the all-of-United Nations approach was the overlap in the counter-terrorism responsibilities of various United Nations entities. UNOCT was established to address this perennial issue[13] by providing strategic leadership, albeit without any enforcement authority, on system-wide efforts and coherence across the Compact entities to ensure balanced implementation of the four pillars of the UNGCTS. Member States also underscored the division of labor and stronger coordination among United Nations entities and their outreach to external

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[12] See A/71/858 para 22 (d).
[13] For example, see A/71/858 (para 11).

bodies.[14] While such coordination achieved some gains as discussed in the previous section, significant capacity building duplication challenges remained, especially between UNOCT and UNODC. This duplication was evident in programme plans, in country-level projects and engagements, communication (e.g., perception as competitors) and outreach to donors (e.g., donors being approached separately on the same topics) and beneficiaries (e.g., 76 per cent of stakeholders surveyed worked with both entities). This overlapping of capacity building support provided by the two Secretariat entities was also linked to the lack of a review of their respective CT/PCVE mandates, especially after the establishment of UNOCT.

43.   Furthermore, there were blurred roles and overlapping activities and results between UNOCT and UNODC. UNOCT capacity building efforts, delivered through UNCCT as its sole capacity building arm at the time of establishment of UNOCT, were to be focused on CT issues "that are not covered by other parts of the United Nations system", while those of UNODC were to focus on supporting the ratification of CT-related international conventions and protocols and legal assistance for national legislation and criminal justice systems to respond to terrorism.[15] While UNOCT rapidly expanded its staff largely based on capacity building programmes, increasing five-fold in seven years,[16] UNODC leveraged its vast network of field offices to sustain its capacity building work, ostensibly addressing interlinkages between terrorism and other forms of crimes. Several donor interviewees noted the UNODC field and country presence as an added advantage for capacity building efforts that require frequent and consistent engagement with national counterparts. UNOCT and UNODC signed a plan of action for collaboration and cooperation in December 2020, but interviewees from both entities acknowledged weaknesses in its implementation.

There were also limitations for a whole-of-society approach to UNGCTS implementation

44.   UNOCT had strong engagement with government counterparts, but less so with civil society and regional organizations. UNOCT received strong Member State support for and engagement with its mandate, and its access to national government counterparts working on CT/PCVE was perceived as a comparative advantage. Staff and Compact members surveyed also rated UNOCT to be most responsive to the needs of national CT and security-related institutions among various stakeholder groups. Furthermore, among the stakeholders interviewed, national government officials were the most positive in their assessment of their cooperation with UNOCT.

45.   This strong government-centric approach of UNOCT contrasted with its more limited engagement with other external stakeholders. These included regional and sub-regional organizations which were identified for their vital role in counter-terrorism by the UNGCTS reviews and for capacity building assistance as a UNCCT priority in 2014. They also included CSOs, youth and women's organizations and academia and research organizations, all of whom play important roles for a whole-of-society approach in the UNGCTS implementation.[17] Staff and Compact members surveyed perceived UNOCT engagement with these external stakeholders as insufficient, as shown in Figure 12, as did a majority of staff and Compact members interviewed. UNOCT engagement remained limited, particularly with the African Union and ECOWAS, even as terrorism threats escalated in their jurisdictions. Interviewed stakeholders raised the following concerns and shortcomings around cultivating a genuine relationship with CSOs:
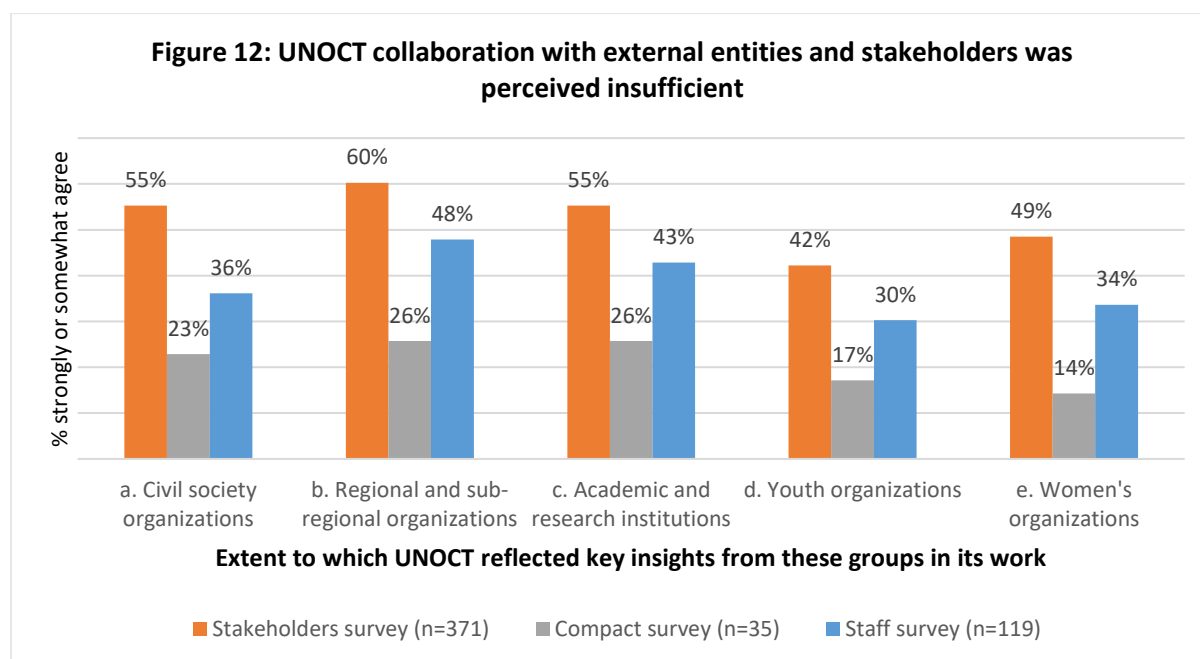
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[14] Ibid., para 71.
[15] Ibid., para 22 (a) and 25.
[16] UNOCT staffing grew from 37 in 2017 to 197 in 2024.
[17] The eighth review of the UNGCTS (General Assembly resolution 77/298) highlighted the important roles of CSOs for a whole-of-society approach in the GCTS implementation.

(i)	inconsistent and superficial nature of interactions, characterized as a box-ticking exercise rather than any form of meaningful collaboration;
(ii)	deliberate evasion, misinformation and a lack of transparency in dealings with UNOCT;
(iii)	development of a CSO consultation strategy by UNOCT without actual consultation; and
(iv)	limited communication and insufficient follow-up on initiatives.

Figure 12: UNOCT collaboration with external entities and stakeholders was perceived insufficient

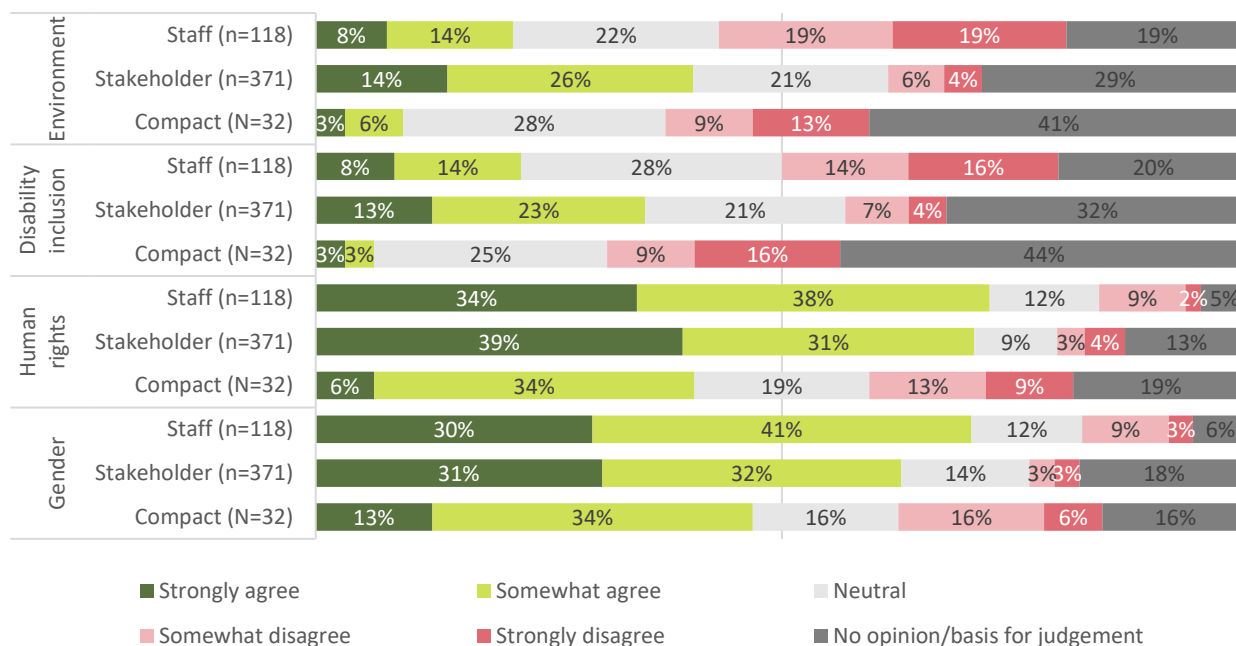Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

E. UNOCT largely integrated gender and human rights into its activities although its contribution to enhanced integration of gender and human rights in the CT/PCVE efforts of Member States remained limited

Gender and human rights were consistently incorporated in UNOCT projects and activities

46.   An analysis of UNOCT publications and internal documents revealed a strong emphasis on gender and human rights in UNOCT activities, including a notable increase in women's participation in projects and initiatives.[18] The establishment of the Human Rights and Gender Section in 2022 enhanced staff awareness and organizational processes on the incorporation of gender and human rights into the design and implementation of activities. Most staff and stakeholders surveyed agreed that UNOCT incorporated gender and human rights into its activities, as shown in Figure 13, as did a majority of staff interviewed. However, disability inclusion and environmental considerations were rarely incorporated in UNOCT work.
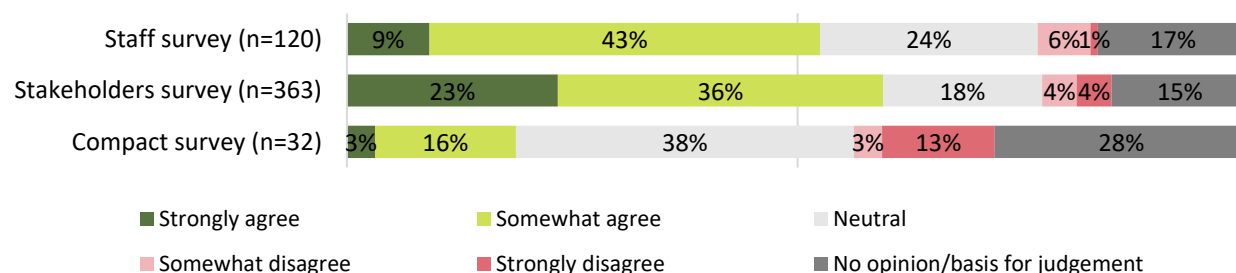
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[18] Annual reports from 2020-2024.

Figure 13: Integration of gender and human rights was considered high in UNOCT work by survey respondents

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/basis for judgement
Environment	Staff (n=118)	8%	14%	22%	19%	19%	19%
	Stakeholder (n=371)	14%	26%	21%	6%	4%	29%
	Compact (N=32)	3%	6%	28%	9%	13%	41%
Disability inclusion	Staff (n=118)	8%	14%	28%	14%	16%	20%
	Stakeholder (n=371)	13%	23%	21%	7%	4%	32%
	Compact (N=32)	3%	3%	25%	9%	16%	44%
Human rights	Staff (n=118)	34%	38%	12%	9%	2%	5%
	Stakeholder (n=371)	39%	31%	9%	3%	4%	13%
	Compact (N=32)	6%	34%	19%	13%	9%	19%
Gender	Staff (n=118)	30%	41%	12%	9%	3%	6%
	Stakeholder (n=371)	31%	32%	14%	3%	3%	18%
	Compact (N=32)	13%	34%	16%	16%	6%	16%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

47.   Notwithstanding these positive assessments of activity-level integration of gender and human rights, several external experts interviewed raised concerns regarding the results-orientation of UNOCT efforts to meaningfully integrate gender and human rights into its work, considering them instead to be a more of a "tick the box" exercise. Moreover, UNOCT contribution to enhanced integration of gender and human rights in the CT/PCVE efforts of Member States it supported in line with the UNGCTS fourth pillar was limited, with survey respondents sharing a mixed assessment as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Perception of UNOCT contributions in enhancing integration of human rights and gender in CT/PCVE efforts of stakeholders
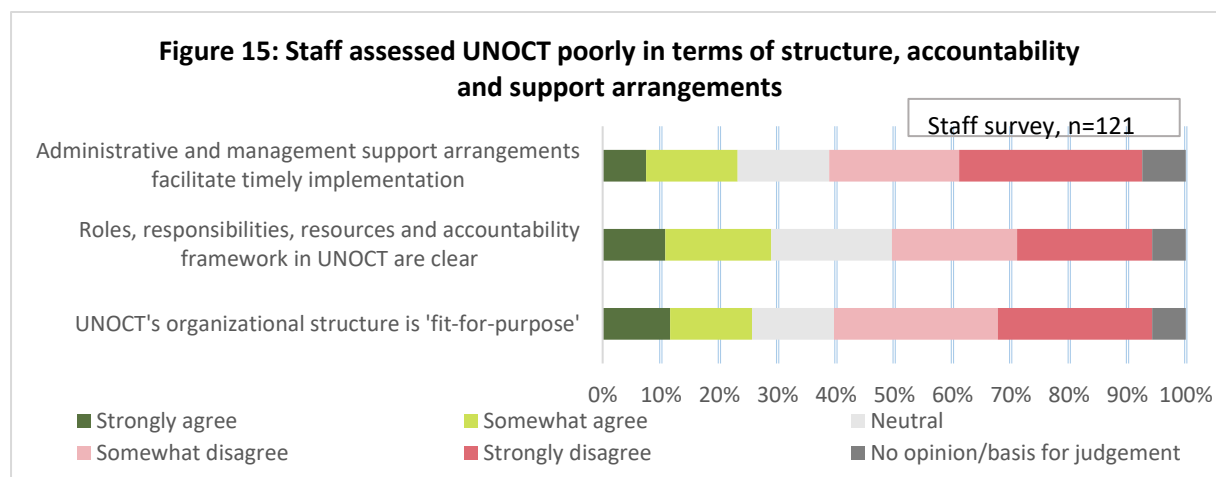
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/basis for judgement
Staff survey (n=120)	9%	43%	24%	6%	1%	17%
Stakeholders survey (n=363)	23%	36%	18%	4%	4%	15%
Compact survey (n=32)	3%	16%	38%	3%	13%	28%

Source: OIOS surveys of staff, stakeholders and Compact members

F. Several internal challenges impeded UNOCT effectiveness and coherence

Structural constraints, including dual capacity building structures and a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities, detracted from UNOCT programme delivery

48.   As shown in Figure 15, staff surveyed shared a generally poor assessment of the UNOCT organizational structure, accountability framework, and administrative and management support arrangements.

Figure 15: Staff assessed UNOCT poorly in terms of structure, accountability and support arrangements

Source: OIOS survey of staff

49.   With regard to organizational structure, UNOCT capacity building has multiple, overlapping units engaged in the single function of capacity building. Originally, UNCCT was established as the primary CT capacity building arm before the creation of UNOCT. However, due to perceived donor associations around specific organizational units and their branding, some funding partners preferred alternative channels. This led to the creation of the Special Projects and Innovation Branch (SPIB), a separate branch, and subsequently a third capacity building unit within the OUSG (the EU-United Nations Global Terrorism Threats Facility on a provisional basis). Additionally, the Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination Branch (PKMCB) and the Human Rights and Gender Section (HRGS) also implemented capacity building projects. Consequently, all five substantive offices within UNOCT were engaged in implementing capacity building projects resulting in duplication of efforts, fragmented approach, and at times, internal competition for resources.[19]

50.   Furthermore, the delineation of responsibilities between UNCCT and SPIB was not clear.[20] Practical implementation led to a degree of interdependence, resulting in cross-support between SPIB and UNCCT with financial resources from both top two funding partners utilized to support activities across both organizational units.[21] Therefore, although the intended separation between the two units proved less distinct in practice, the dual structure created operational complexities.

51.   Staff also highlighted issues related to clarity of roles and accountability within UNOCT; they reported perceived duplication of efforts, unclear roles and reporting lines and what was seen as bureaucratic bottlenecks. Some staff commented on the large size of the OUSG, which accounted for 14 per cent of UNOCT staff and stood out compared to much smaller OUSG shares in other Secretariat

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[19] Multiple oversight reports recommended UNOCT to consolidate its capacity building work into a single unit.
[20] OIOS 2018 audit recommendation for UNOCT to develop and issue a formal Secretary-General's bulletin outlining its structure and the functions of its various organizational units was yet to be implemented.
[21] UNOCT data showed that $130,000 of Saudi Arabia contributions were used to support SPIB work (2018-2021) and $1.45 million of Qatari funds used to support UNCCT work (2020-2024).

departments.[22] This was partly attributable to the temporary hosting of the Global Threats Facility, and also to what UNOCT considered to be the wide range of OUSG strategic functions, including directly advising and supporting the head of entity and enabling internal controls.

There were administrative delays that hindered timely project implementation

52.   Staff interviewed and surveyed noted that UNOCT administrative support arrangements were characterized by fragmentation, inefficiency and a lack of clarity. Responsibilities were divided between the Executive Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and UNOCT Strategic Planning and Programme Support Section (SPPSS), leading to confusion and delays. These were further affected by staffing gaps in SPPSS and OUSG administrative oversight that nearly a quarter of staff interviewed perceived as excessive. Centralized processes and limited delegation of authority, particularly at the field-level, were identified as factors that hindered project implementation. UNOCT noted steps it has taken to address these challenges through ongoing consultations between Headquarters and field offices, leading to the streamlining of workflows, operational guidance, faster processing of procurement requests and the piloting of delegated authority for specific actions to enhance operational efficiency. Furthermore, the lack of a dedicated executive office for UNOCT was seen as contributing to these challenges, resulting in significant delays, frustration and impeding overall effectiveness as reported by staff interviewed. Funding partners also cited examples of inefficiencies and delays, resulting in under-expenditure and cancellation of funds, which UNOCT interviewees considered was attributable to both administrative and programme management challenges. Furthermore, as discussed in paragraph 20, delays in fund disbursements by funding partners also negatively affected staff contracts and morale.

The lack of a robust results monitoring framework hindered UNOCT ability to track progress and demonstrate impact

53.   Although the UNOCT SPRF was highly aligned with the UNGCTS, it did not translate into the SPRF being used as an effective tool for planning, monitoring and reporting on results, primarily due to an underdeveloped SPRF lacking clear indicators and measurable outcomes. The majority of staff surveyed did not consider that the SPRF provided strategic direction for programming, identified niche areas or enhanced results management in UNOCT. Its use was uneven across organizational units, with only UNCCT utilizing it more extensively. Lack of consultation in its development and buy-in across the Office, low management priority and accountability for its use, and emphasis on capacity building outcomes limited the utility of the SPRF as an effective strategic tool. While efforts were underway to improve monitoring through the Programme Management Unit, its undercapacity and placement in UNCCT, lack of clarity and consistency in reporting, concerns about the relevance and usefulness of SPRF-based reports affected UNOCT-wide results monitoring and reporting. The absence of a robust monitoring framework hindered UNOCT ability to track progress and demonstrate impact. Interviewed Member State representatives and staff cited inadequate monitoring of results and progress, and only 30 per cent of surveyed staff considered results monitoring to be adequate. Additionally, a review of donor reports indicated a focus on outputs rather than outcomes.
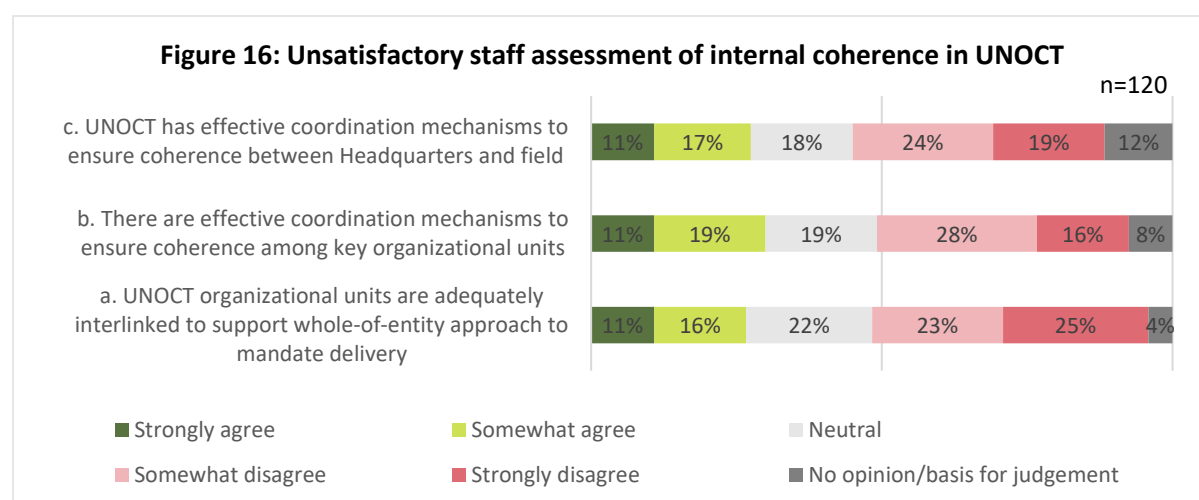
Achieving a coherent and integrated, whole-of-entity approach to mandate delivery remained a major challenge

54.   All the internal challenges discussed above contributed to a lack of internal coherence in UNOCT, hindering the intended whole-of-entity approach in mandate delivery. These issues strained relationships among the major organizational units, leading to a less collaborative environment

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[22] For example, OUSG share of staff was 6% in DPPA and DPO, 5% in DESA and OLA, 4% in ECE and 3% in OIOS.

characterized by siloed leadership and fragmented operations, competition for visibility and fundraising, limited communication and information sharing, field coordination challenges and an overall lack of a clear and shared strategic vision for the Office. Additionally, the separate branding of UNCCT and UNOCT created confusion among stakeholders and contradicted the shared vision of a unified organization. For example, while a slim majority of surveyed stakeholders (53 per cent) positively assessed internal coherence in UNOCT, only one-fifth of the Compact respondents did so.

55.   This was reflected in staff feedback as well, with 86 per cent of interviewed staff across all units sharing negative and mixed assessments of internal coherence. Surveyed staff were equally critical of internal coherence in UNOCT, as shown in Figure 16. UNOCT established several mechanisms to improve internal coherence, including the Programme Review Board (PRB), Senior Management Team (SMT) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). While a few interviewed and surveyed staff noted some progress made through these mechanisms, most noted these mechanisms were still a work in progress.

Figure 16: Unsatisfactory staff assessment of internal coherence in UNOCT

n=120

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion/basis for judgement
c. UNOCT has effective coordination mechanisms to ensure coherence between Headquarters and field	11%	17%	18%	24%	19%	12%
b. There are effective coordination mechanisms to ensure coherence among key organizational units	11%	19%	19%	28%	16%	8%
a. UNOCT organizational units are adequately interlinked to support whole-of-entity approach to mandate delivery	11%	16%	22%	23%	25%	4%

Source: OIOS survey of staff

V.   Conclusion

56.   After a rapid five-fold growth in staffing in the eight years since its establishment, UNOCT is at a critical juncture, struggling to reconcile its ambitious mandates with operational realities. While its alignment with the UNGCTS is clear, over-emphasis on direct capacity building, often reliant on extra-budgetary funding, has detracted from its strategic focus. This has created among Compact entities a perception of UNOCT as a competitor rather than as a neutral facilitator, thus eroding trust in UNOCT and detracting it from its system-wide coordination role.

57.   There is a strong incentive for UNOCT to redefine its role within the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture by moving beyond a project-driven approach and embracing its unique capacity to convene, coordinate and provide strategic leadership. While there is value to its direct capacity building assistance on highly specialized, niche areas, the office can add even more value by strengthening its role in coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the system-wide results achieved on all four pillars of the UNGCTS for a balanced implementation. To this effect and in line with its leadership and Compact Secretariat roles, UNOCT can conduct a mapping of capacity building efforts of Compact entities on CT/PCVE and make it publicly available on the Compact page of the UNOCT website to address overlaps in capacity building efforts among the broader Compact entities. Internally, there are opportunities for UNOCT to strengthen its structure, streamline its administrative processes and develop a robust results framework to ensure accountability and demonstrate impact.

58.	In the context of the UN80 initiative,[23] there are opportunities to consider a review of the CT/PCVE mandates and capacity building activities of UNOCT and UNODC with a view to minimizing duplication and maximizing efficiencies among these two Secretariat entities.

# VI.	Recommendations

59.	OIOS makes five important recommendations to UNOCT, all of which were accepted.

Recommendation 1: (Result A)

60.	**UNOCT should revise its Strategic Plan and Results Framework (SPRF) to support a more balanced implementation of its five main functions.** This may include:

a.	Internal consultations and feedback from key external stakeholders to identify priority areas of focus and outcomes for each of the five functions;

b.	Identification of areas of specialized CT and PCVE capacity building support;

c.	Development of key outcomes and indicators for all areas of work supported by an enhanced, whole-of-office programme management and monitoring system;

d.	A mechanism, including accountability framework, to ensure consistent use of the SPRF by all organizational units to demonstrate their contributions to the overall Office-wide objectives and results; and

e.	Communication of the SPRF with the Compact entities and other stakeholders.

Indicator of implementation: Revised strategic plan and results framework.

Expected change(s): Enhanced mandate focus, strategic plan and results framework supporting a more balanced implementation of the five functions of UNOCT.

Recommendation 2: (Results C and D)

61.	**UNOCT should develop a clear communication and results framework for its coordination mandate.** This may include:

a.	Development of the results-framework in consultation with the Compact entities;

b.	A procedure for implementation of the results-framework, including responsibilities of UNOCT in line with its leadership role, and of other Compact entities; and

c.	Development of communication materials on the mandates, roles and division of responsibilities among the main entities working on CT/PCVE, including CTED, UNOCT and UNODC, and upload them on the website.

Indicator of implementation: Results-framework for system-wide coordination on CT/PCVE is developed, implemented and communicated.

Expected change(s): Enhanced coordination of system-wide efforts on CT/PCVE, including a better understanding of roles and division of labor of United Nations entities among stakeholders.

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[23] The Secretary-General launched the UN80 Initiative in March 2025 to develop reform proposals in three key areas: identifying efficiencies and improvements; reviewing the implementation of mandates from Member States; and a strategic review of deeper, more structural changes and programme realignment.

Recommendation 3: (Results C and D)

62.   **UNOCT should develop an action plan to enhance engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs), regional organizations and support to United Nations country teams, special political missions and peacekeeping operations to ensure that counter-terrorism is better mainstreamed into their work.**

Indicator of implementation: An action plan for enhancing engagement with CSOs, regional organizations, UNCTs, special political and peacekeeping missions to better mainstream counter-terrorism in their work is developed.

Expected change(s): Strengthened engagement of key external and United Nations entities for UNGCTS implementation.

Recommendation 4: (Result C and F)

63.   **UNOCT should rationalize its organizational structure, including administrative and management support arrangements, for more effective mandate delivery and improved internal coherence.** The restructuring may consider establishing three organizational units responsible for (a) policy, coordination and consensus building; (b) capacity building; and (c) operations. This may also include:

> a. Clear delineation of roles, responsibilities and accountability framework for each organizational unit and improve delegation of authority to managers in line with the DMSPC accountability framework;
> b. Merging of UNCCT and SPIB into a single structure for capacity building;
> c. Consolidation of all management support work under one organizational unit;
> d. Consideration to ensure "One UNOCT" branding across all functions; and
> e. Formalized internal coordination mechanisms.

Indicator of implementation: Restructured organizational structure.

Expected change(s): Enhanced organizational structure of UNOCT conducive to improved mandate delivery and internal coherence, including improved access to accurate and timely programmatic and financial data and reports for programme managers.

Recommendation 5: (Result B, C and F)

64.   **UNOCT should develop a field presence strategy outlining longer-term strategic priorities and criteria for its field offices.** The strategy should be informed by priority terrorist threats and specific needs at the regional- and country-levels, drawing on the full range of UNOCT comparative advantages, together with those of other partners, rather than relying on single-themed funding. This may include: (a) clearly defined terms of reference, reporting lines and delegation of authority for field offices; and (b) considerations for utilizing other Secretariat presences, where feasible.

Indicator of implementation: Field presence strategy developed and adopted.

Expected change(s): Improved field orientation enabling more efficient and effective mandate delivery.

Annex I: UNOCT management response

United Nations 🇺🇳 **Nations Unies**

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM   MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye	DATE: 16 May 2025
A: Under-Secretary-General	REFERENCE: OCT-2025-00487
Office of Internal Oversight Services	

FROM: Vladimir Voronkov
DE: Under-Secretary-General
Office of Counter-Terrorism

SUBJECT: **Management Response to the Draft Report of the Office of Internal Oversight**
OBJET: **Services on the Evaluation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**
(UNOCT)

1. I am pleased to acknowledge the receipt of your inter-office memorandum OIOS-2025-00840 dated 2 May 2025 and the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) submitted for our review and formal comments.

2. We have reviewed the draft report (IED-25-008) and confirm our acceptance of all five recommendations it contains. Recommendations 1, 3, and 4 have been accepted with specific considerations regarding their implementation, reflecting contextual and operational factors. Accordingly, we have finalized the management response, including a proposed action plan that outlines the key steps we intend to prioritize in the coming years.

3. The development of the 2026–2028 UNOCT Strategic Plan and Results Framework is currently underway through an inclusive and consultative process. This initiative will address three key recommendations of OIOS, while reaffirming UNOCT's mandate as the lead entity in the areas of counter-terrorism (CT) and preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). In parallel, UNOCT will formulate an action plan to strengthen engagement with civil society organizations. Additional engagement strategies, recommended by OIOS, for collaboration with regional organizations, UN country teams, and special political and peacekeeping missions will be pursued as resources permit. Regarding the recommendation to rationalize UNOCT's organizational structure, several actions have already been implemented, while others remain constrained by current funding arrangements and mandate requirements.

4. I would like to thank the evaluation team for their professionalism and for the time invested in this important exercise.

5. We look forward to seeing the final report.

Enclosure:
-Appendix I

cc: Demetra Arapakos
       Oguljeren Niyazberdiyeva